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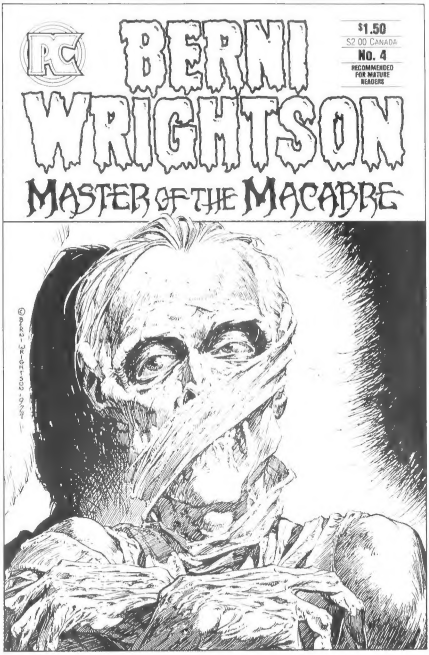

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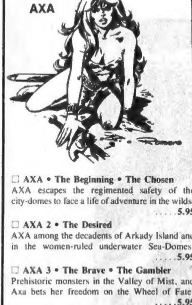

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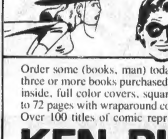

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UP FRONT

One of the questions I'm asked most often by readers of COMICS INTERVIEW, fans of my comics work and fellow professionals in the field is: *What else have you been up to lately — are you still writing?*

The answer to that, despite the considerable challenge of editing and publishing a monthly magazine, is a resounding *yes!*

Over the past year or so, until recently, there were of course the monthly adventures of Superman and The Batman in WORLD'S FINEST COMICS — probably the most visible of my scripting efforts in the comics sphere.

Also during that time, however, I produced a staggering (at least, it staggered *me!*) amount of less visible comics work, much of it for Marvel and most of it distributed outside the usual channels. Specialty comics starring Spider-Man, the Hulk, Power Man, the X-Men, Fire-Star, Ice Man and others — many of them with print-runs in the millions — for sponsors ranging from the American Dental Association to the American Cancer Society. Also during that time, I acted as Editorial Consultant for Marvel Books, helping to launch a new publishing line that includes everything from storybooks illustrated by **Marie Severin** to coloring and activity books (including DUNGEONS & DRAGONS) to film adaptations illustrated with full-color photos, such as KRULL. I edited about 40 releases for the first year, and wrote several of them myself.

As if all that weren't enough, I've also got a couple paperback books scheduled for publication this summer — GHOST KNIGHTS OF CAMELOT from Avon Books, and ROBOT REVOLT from Scholastic Books. Both are set to appear on the stands in August or September.

So for those of you who've been asking: It's been a *busy* year! But, believe it or not, COMICS INTERVIEW is my pet project and still the most fun of all!

—David

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"I tend to kill off characters I take over."

Alan singing with the Sinister Ducks.

ALAN MOORE

Since the 1979 publication of Alan Moore's first strip in a nationally distributed paper — the hilarious ROSCOE MOSCOW, which he wrote and drew under the pseudonym "Curt Vile" — he has become not only one of the most respected comics scripters in Britain, but also the most prolific — working for WARRIOR, 2000 AD and Marvel UK simultaneously, as well as writing and drawing a weekly 5-panel strip for a local newspaper. He has also been a rock journalist and an occasional member of the rarely-seen Sinister Ducks, a wonderfully eccentric band which includes David J from Bauhaus. David and Alan have just recorded, "This Vicious Cabaret" — which appeared in strip form in WARRIOR #12 — for release as a single.

With the addition of DC's SAGA OF THE SWAMP THING to his workload, 1984 finds Alan busier than ever. Nonetheless, on a wintery day in the English Midlands town of Northampton, we received a warm welcome from Alan, his wife Phyllis and their lively daughters, Leah, age 6, and Amber, 3.

The conversation which follows revealed Alan's talent to be based on a wide range of influences, a deep-seated integrity, and a wicked sense of humor, all shot through with a rich vein of honest humility.

GUY LAWLEY: *You grew up in Northampton?*

ALAN MOORE: If you can call it growing up, yeah.

STEVE WHITAKER: *And you read comics as a kid?*

ALAN: Comics, when I was growing up, were part of a working class tradition.

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Alan Moore
Occupation: Freelance Writer
Residence: Northampton (Murder Mecca of the Midlands), England.
Credits: MARVELMAN, V FOR VENDETTA, SAGA OF THE SWAMP THING, BOJEFFRIES SAGA, SKIZZ, WARPSMITH, CAPTAIN BRITAIN, D.R. & QUINCH, etc.
Favorite Eye: The right one.
Favorite Parent: My Mum, but then that's usually the way with boys, isn't it?
Most Feared Form of Death: Having a slate fall from a rooftop and slice my brain into two halves.
Favorite Comic: LOVE & ROCKETS

"I'm trying in my own way to put

Mothers gave them to their kids to pacify them. Instead of a Valium, it would be a copy of THE TOPPER or THE BEEZER.

STEVE: *As opposed to the posh boys' comics like THE EAGLE or BOYS WORLD?*

ALAN: We knew our places in those days, Steve. We didn't want to rise above our station! I think the first American comic I picked up was an early FLASH. I was just enchanted by the idea of the superhero, as I was before that by science fiction, magic, fantasy, children's versions of the Greek myths, the Arthurian legends — anything that wasn't real. Then you get the FLASH — the idea of someone being able to move that fast, the costume coming out of the ring! After that, I just bought anything I could find . . . BLACKHAWK, all the **Mort Weisinger** stuff — the Superman Family, the kryptonite; that was an infatuation. Then came the FANTASTIC FOUR and I became a Marvel zombie, which was an enjoyable thing to be up 'til about 1968.

STEVE: *The year it all splintered apart . . .*

ALAN: To a degree it was a matter of Marvel losing its integrity. That's a pretty sweeping statement, but in my eyes at the time, that's how it was. Frankly, the DC characters had been dull for a number of years, but Superman is still Superman. He's got that integrity and I don't think anything could disrupt it.

STEVE: *Were you active in fandom?*

ALAN: I had a minor involvement in fandom from age fourteen to seventeen. When I was about 16 or 17 I got involved with Northampton Arts Lab, where you'd get together with some people, hire a room, put out a magazine, do performances. I learned a lot about timing dialogue in comics from acting, and I learned how to use words really effectively from poetry. There's a

poem by **Brian Patten** called "Where Are You Now, Batman?" It has a haunting line about "Blackhawk has gone off to commit suicide in the hangars of innocence." It made you think, "Ah! If only they'd look at those characters with a bit of poetry in the comics themselves!" I think that's where my attitude came from.

GUY: *When you started doing strips, you were drawing as well as writing?*

ALAN: Yeah. The first one of any import was for an Oxford underground paper called THE BACK-STREET BUGLE. In the mid-'70s, I was working for a pipe-fitting company, getting really depressed at the idea of working in an office for the rest of my life. Then Phyllis and I got married, and I thought if I didn't pack in work now, I soon wouldn't have the nerve to. So I went on Welfare for awhile, but I was thinking, "It's about time I was making some money out of cartooning." For a long time nothing happened, then I sent SOUNDS, a weekly music paper, two episodes of ROSCOE MOSCOW, about this deranged alcoholic detective lost in a fantasy **Raymond Chandler** world. It was blatantly stolen from **Art Spiegelman's** ACE HOLE. I was bringing in a lot of influence from ARCADE, which is probably the best comic in the history of the universe! SOUNDS sent me a telegram, 'cause I wasn't on the 'phone system. There was Phyllis with our poor starving baby in her arms, and I got this telegram saying "Liked ROSCOE. *Stop.*" It was like something out of the movies, you know.

So I was doing ROSCOE once a week. It wasn't very good 'cause I can't draw, but I suppose by my slogging away at the stippling, it acquired a certain demented energy. It did teach me storytelling — each week, being faced with a regularly defined white space to tell a certain amount of story in. Then I got MAXWELL THE MAGIC CAT in the NORTHANTS POST, a local weekly newspaper. Because it was going on the Children's Page, I said I'd do it under the name of **Jill De Ray.**

GUY: *Wasn't that the name of some demented French nobleman?*

ALAN: **Gilles De Rais** was a child murderer — possibly the biggest child murderer in history! *(Laughter.)*

STEVE: *It's moved off the Children's Page now.*

ALAN: Yeah, that was their decision. It seems to have quite a cult following. I'm still doing it. God knows why! But I realized I couldn't make a living out of drawing . . . I was too slow. I knew **Steve Moore**, who was doing a lot of scripting — he was doing "Future Shocks," the SF shorts in 2000 AD — so I did a sample

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From WARRIOR #1: the new Marvelman saga begins.

MICHAEL MORAN IS HAVING THE DREAM AGAIN. IT ISN'T A GOOD DREAM...
EDITOR DEZ SKINN
STORY ALAN MOORE
ART GARRY LEACH
LETTERS G.GEORGE

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the mystique back into superheroes."

"...AND THEN HE WAS GONE. IT WAS LIKE COMING OUT OF A DREAM... BUT I HAD PROOF THAT IT HAD BEEN REAL."
"I FOUND I COULD FLY, THAT I HAD TREMENDOUS STRENGTH. I WAS INVULNERABLE TO ALL HARM... I WAS MARVELMAN!!"
LIZ? "YOU'RE LAUGHING. WHAT'S WRONG?"
"I'M SORRY, MIKE... BUT THAT'S SUCH A BLOODY STUPID STORY!"

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Above and below: Mike Moran (Marvelman) tells his wife about his superheroic alter ego. "I'm trying to portray what such a situation would do to an ordinary bloke." Script by Moore, art by Leach. From WARRIOR #1.

script, a JUDGE DREDD story, and showed it to Steve. He corrected the obvious deficiencies for me and I submitted it to Alan Grant at 2000 AD. He was great — he spent a lot of his own time encouraging budding script-writers. I started doing "Future Stocks" for him.

At the same time Marvel UK's DR. WHO comic accepted a Cybermen back-up strip I did. That was my first work with **David Lloyd**. After that I did one about some plastic monsters — you know what DR. WHO is like —

STEVE: *They're* all *plastic!* (Laughter.)

GUY: *How did you come to work for WARRIOR?*

ALAN: I'd just joined the Society of Strip Illustrators. I was interviewed for the SSI Journal, and they asked me what I wanted for the future. And I said that apart from fame, wealth, weapons, and a good five-cent cigar, I wanted someone to revive MARVELMAN. Since I was about twelve I'd had this brilliant idea for reviving the character. At the time, **Dez Skinn** was doing little comic strips to advertise toothpaste, stuff like that, and Dez phoned me up in 1981, one day, and said, "Would you like to do a treatment for MARVELMAN?" So I worked out the continuity up to 1985. **Garry Leach** drew it.

GUY: *You set the series very much in the real world, with the exception of the alien technology which comes from outside . . .*

ALAN: And then put this superhero in a silly, skin-tight costume in the middle of London.

GUY: *The whole strip becomes, to some extent, a comment on superheroes . . .*

ALAN: MARVELMAN steps back from the superhero, examining it from one step away — commenting on the obvious cliches and the absurdities of comics. I want to have all the superhero icons there: the fortress of solitude, the secret identity, the powers, the origin story . . . and yes, there *is* going to be a Marveldog! You take all these cliches, twist them one degree to the right, and you've got something that's totally fresh. The idea of the secret identity has become a major plotline in MARVELMAN — it's not just a gimmick.

STEVE: *There isn't the usual wish-fulfillment element in MARVELMAN. You don't make the superhero identity something which is desirable.*

ALAN: It's frightening, what anybody that powerful would do to people around them psychologically. Look at Marvelman — he's not a human being. I can see him gradually developing a complete contempt for human beings. Everyone would look so crude compared to him. I'd like to explore this idea at DC — what Superman has done to the Earth by his very presence. No matter how hard people struggled, no matter what advances they made, what personal bests they

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"Comics have suffered from auto-cannibalism."

achieved, they'd be nothing compared to Superman or Marvelman. I also think the superhero is an incredibly poignant figure.

GUY: *The experiment which created MARVELMAN was called "Project Zarathustra," which brings in the idea of the* Übermensch, *Nietzsche's twisted vision of the superior man.*

ALAN: Yeah, that's the origin or the superman concept, and it's a fascist ideal. I mean, humans to a superman would stink, they'd be uncoordinated. Every move Marvelman makes is pure poetry.

STEVE: *So why does he make love to his alter ego's human wife?*

ALAN: I suppose he has needs like everyone else!

GUY: *He's changing, isn't he? Marvelman and his alter ego, Mike Moran, are moving farther apart as the strip develops.*

ALAN: We're not going to make a big thing of it — no Dark Marvelman! *(Laughter.)*

STEVE: *Mike Moran is much more accessible than Marvelman . . .*

ALAN: He's nicer than Marvelman, who is almost totally unknowable. With Marvelman, the danger is that his heart will turn to stone, his emotions could die. His mind works by different standards and values, whereas Mike is just an ordinary bloke. I'm trying to portray what such a situation would do to a normal bloke, to his life — that human angle on the whole thing. Superheroes have become smothered in their own cliches, and I'm kicking against that.

GUY: *Will the strip ever be seen in an American edition, in color? I can foresee problems with Marvel Comics . . .*

ALAN: I dunno. We'll just have to see. I'm not prepared to change his name.

STEVE: *'Round about the same time as WARRIOR, Marvel UK asked you to take on their latest incarnation of CAPTAIN BRITAIN, which Alan Davis was drawing.*

ALAN: After **Garry Leach** handed MARVELMAN's pencils — and then the whole thing — over to **Alan Davis,** it became a real problem. You had the only two British superhero strips, both being done by the same artist and writer. Keeping them different became our main objective, really. It helped having an artist like Alan. He designs a character from the skeleton up — so they've each got a different body language, posture . . .

STEVE: *Captain Britain's your average meathead superhero.*

ALAN: Yeah — with all those muscles, and that military posture. Whereas Marvelman is slim, graceful — a ballet dancer's body. Marvelman's my optimum superhero, the one I'd do with no restrictions.

STEVE: *CAPTAIN BRITAIN's more mainstream . . .*

CAPTAIN BRITAIN... ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE CAPTAIN ENGLAND OF THIS EARTH...
...AND CAPTAIN ALBION, TEMPORARILY ON LOAN FROM THE EARTH NEXT DOOR.
HOW DO.
I'FAITH, 'TIS WELL MET, SIRRAH.

A confused Captain Britain, from DAREDEVILS #6 and #8. Art by Alan Davis.

ALAN: He's pure Marvel! He's there in the Marvel Universe with a billion other super characters all around him. You can't get that same realism.

STEVE: *Was it only two episodes you wrote before you killed him off?*

ALAN: Yeah, I tend to kill off characters I take over.

WHAT DO YOU TAKE ME FOR? OF COURSE I KNOW WHAT I'M GETTING INTO.
I'M IN A PARALLEL UNIVERSE FIGHTING AN ALTERNATE VERSION OF MYSELF ALONGSIDE A GROUP OF PARAHUMAN MERCENARIES WHO WANT ME TO HELP THE WRONGLY ACCUSED MAJESTRIX OF...
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"Marvelman is my optimum superhero."

STEVE: *It's actually a rebirth situation, breaking the mold, rebuilding the character in your own image.*

ALAN: I feel I can't do anything with a character until I've destroyed and rebuilt him from the ground up. Well, anyway, that's what I did with Captain Britain.

GUY: *Your other major strip in WARRIOR is V FOR VENDETTA.*

ALAN: It's one of my favorites. I feel proudest of that strip.

GUY: *How did it come about?*

ALAN: **David Lloyd** was drawing NIGHTRAVEN, the Thirties pulp-style feature for Marvel UK, and he was fed up with going to the library to look up 1930s references. Dez wanted to continue a NIGHTRAVEN type of strip. I said, "Let's keep that exoticism of setting, but in a different time. Let's do it in the future." I worked out the history of the world: World War III in 1988, the aftermath, the fascist takeover of Britain in 1992. I worked out who the main characters would be — with the Fate computer, the Head, the Finger . . . these different government departments . . .

GUY: *And the star of the strip, this mysterious anarchist called V who models himself after Guy Fawkes and wages a one-man war on the government . . .*

ALAN: The ambience in V FOR VENDETTA is the *real* star of the book. What V does is to take certain twentieth-century preoccupations — like fascism, the bomb, individual liberty — and boil them down to a sort of ground zero, where everything's played out in absolute terms. Also, I was influenced by **Harlan Ellison's** "Prowler In The City At The Edge Of Night" — **Jack the Ripper** against this sterile future environment. The juxtaposition excited me — a creature of the past in the future. That eventually grew into V, who is an anachronism. He's into old films, all the old culture that's been eradicated. He quotes **Shakespeare** and **Goethe.** He is a lavish creature who doesn't fit these bleak backgrounds.

The strip really grew by itself. England was to be ruled by these vicious National Front Nazis, so I could get in a dig at them, and I could get in a fashionable dig at the Nuclear thing. I intended it to be a pretty trite piece of propaganda. But it didn't work like that — it came out superficial and hollow. I realized that the only way to treat it honestly was to take the fascist characters and get deeply involved in their mentality. So there's various different types of fascists in it: Finch, the "policeman with the honest soul," who's got reasons for supporting the regime — and Almond the wife-beater, the emotional fascist.

The return of Marvelman, drawn by Garry Leach for WARRIOR #1.

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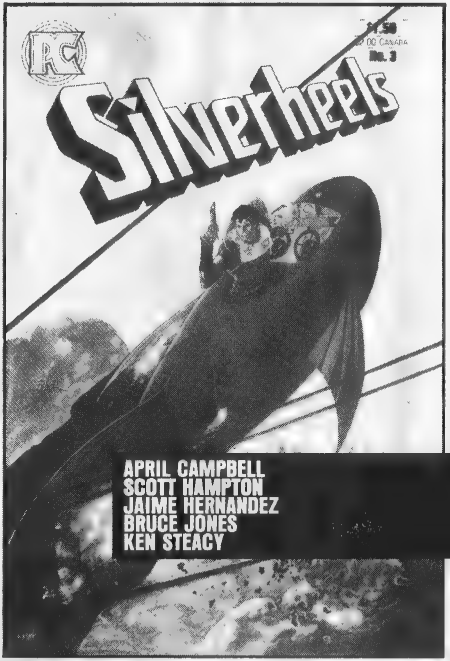


PACIFIC. TOMORROW IS HERE.

"Human evil fascinates me. To pretend evil only happens to monsters is evasive."

STEVE: *He's an amazingly well-studied character. He deserved everything he got. That's a marvelous scene, where V kills him.*

ALAN: Dave Lloyd and I had a chuckle when he got it. There's no violence, just V's hunched back . . .

GUY: *And the expression on Almond's face!*

ALAN: I want people to understand the implication of what V does. He's killed Almond, and you get that kick out of it — you say, "He deserved it!" But in the next episode, you're forced to say, "Yeah, but he was married. What's going to happen to his wife?" So there's that whole episode with Rosemary Almond, the widow. In most comics there's no permanence in death. The bodies are whisked away. In V FOR VENDETTA , they're still there the next morning. The plot isn't the most important thing in V FOR VENDETTA, it's the resonances. The real story's going on in the subtext . . . between the lines.

The first book set up the situation, established the characters. In the second book, "This Vicious Cabaret," V's not around very much. Instead, we're getting into the minor characters, like Rosemary Almond. The main story's about Evey, the apparently orphaned girl V sort of adopts in the first book. I'm sure this approach will lose us a lot of friends, but it's what we wanted to do. The second book doesn't work out too well on its own, in comic-book terms.

STEVE: *It's a necessary part of the whole, though.*

ALAN: The third book will tie it all together. It's got a definite climax. If you see all three books as one novel, there's nothing wrong with having character studies making up the middle.

GUY: *The characters are so well-rounded. Adam Susan — the lonely, celibate head of the Government . . .*

ALAN: He gives a rational, eloquent defense of fascism, as a necessity for the times, and as a necessity for living. And I want people to think "Yeah, that is true — *to a degree.*" And yet while the passion of what V says in his TV broadcast in WARRIOR #16 is not as logical as Adam Susan's speech, it's a lot more appealing.

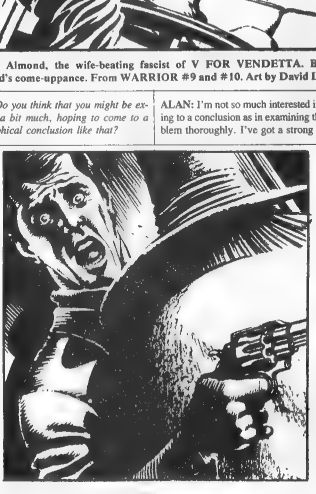
STEVE: *He's talking about honesty with yourself.*

ALAN: Exactly. I perceive two absolute principles of politics: fascism and anarchy. All the others are just subdivisions. The only question in politics is, "*Should* we be ruled?" That's what's being discussed in V FOR VENDETTA. And I don't know the answer.

Above: Almond, the wife-beating fascist of V FOR VENDETTA. Below: Almond's come-uppance. From WARRIOR #9 and #10. Art by David Lloyd.

GUY: *Do you think that you might be expecting a bit much, hoping to come to a philosophical conclusion like that?*

ALAN: I'm not so much interested in coming to a conclusion as in examining the problem thoroughly. I've got a strong dislike



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Captain Britain dies in MARVEL SUPER-HEROES #388. Art by Davis.

of what I've referred to as "The Baby Bird School of Comic-Book Moralizing" — where the writer gets the audience to sit there with their beaks open and feeds them, "Here's what you should think about nuclear war . . ." We might be good comics writers, but we don't necessarily know anything about morality, human nature, and politics.

STEVE: *It has to be left up to the reader to choose.*

GUY: *V FOR VENDETTA seems very inherently British.*

ALAN: There are a few people in America who do like it. I thought it might be too British to translate well. **Frank Miller** liked it, but he had one problem — he didn't know who **Guy Fawkes** was! But we had to put up with those references to **Benedict Arnold** in SUPERBOY without knowing who he was! *(Laughter.)*

GUY: *The BOJEFFRIES SAGA is your most English strip of all.*

ALAN: That's my other favorite. It's as experimental in its way as V FOR VENDETTA. Humor in comics, since **Harvey Kurtzman's** brilliant MADs, has become formularized — fast humor, lots of sight gags in every panel. I wanted to get the character stuff back into humor, and the England of the '50s that I can remember — the quirkiness of it all. **Steve Parkhouse** is the main vision behind the strip.

STEVE: *It's an opportunity for you to use all that colloquial, idiomatic language.*

ALAN: I love language: slang, jargon, poetry. How silly it can be — and how powerful and evocative.

STEVE: *It could be a problem for American readers.*

GUY: *That's what people said about MONTY PYTHON! Alan, are you getting a lot of positive feedback from the States about WARRIOR?*

ALAN: WARRIOR is not widely distributed in the USA. It is available and a number of the comics professionals read it, which is what happened with 2000 AD and JUDGE DREDD — something which spreads out from the artists and creative people to the fans. The reaction has been favorable. It's been a contributory factor in my getting work in the USA.

GUY: *Did you sit down and think how the Swamp Thing related to his world, like with Marvelman and V?*

ALAN: The main thing I wanted to understand was the character himself. I wanted a credible scientific explanation for the SWAMP THING. There were some things in the origin that bothered me. His being a plant hadn't been explored in depth.

GUY: *Just gimmicks like the hand re-growing . . .*

ALAN: **Weis** and **Wrightson** had him root once, I think.

GUY: *You make whole stories out of these things!*

ALAN: They're interesting in their own right. "The Anatomy Lesson" in SWAMP THING #21 is my favorite one of date.

GUY: *Steve Bissette and John Totleben have a lot of idea input to the strip, don't they?*

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"The reality of Swamp Thing had been lost."

ALAN: Yeah. One of the most amazing things about SWAMP THING is that, totally independently, in two different countries, me and Steve and John have come to an almost identical vision of how the character should be treated. In my first letter to them I said I felt the reality of the Swamp Thing had been lost. He'd become this guy who was just a certain color, a certain posture. I said let's do some real close-ups where you can see the vines, you can see the leaves, you can see the patches of mold — that texture to him. And Steve and John said, "Great! This is just what we want to do!"

We're doing a Demon plotline, using **Jack Kirby**'s Demon. Most of the plot is Steve's. His wife Nancy works in a home for autistic children, such as the one we're using in the story. And the idea of the Kamaro — this creature who feeds on fear — being let loose in an environment where these kids live in their own private universes of fear, was Steve's. They sent me these sketches of the Demon, and the look on his face, smoldering with repressed violence, was fantastic!

STEVE: *But he's bright red and yellow all over . . .*

ALAN: We're changing that — he's going to be more grim and shadowy. Writing the Demon, I felt this weight on me — the world-view of a creature from Hell!

STEVE: *So SWAMP THING is still essentially a horror book?*

ALAN: I call it a horror book. Once I'd got the character sorted out, my main question was, "How am I going to approach a horror book?" That's a field in itself, and one I'm really interested in. The **Wein** and **Wrightson** SWAMP THING was looking back to a 1940's Universal Studios movie vision of horror. As **Stephen King** said in DANSE MACABRE, the reality set has altered. Take the **Val Lewton** version of CAT PEOPLE. The scenes in the park are so obviously shot on a sound stage — the lighting's wrong. People expect something different now. And things have changed since the first SWAMP THING. EC has, again, come to dominate the horror field.

STEVE: *You mean through the Pacific stuff, such as TWISTED TALES?*

ALAN: Yes, it's an EC retread, with some influences from the undergrounds. And **Bruce Jones** does it really well. He's a good writer. But it's derivative. I want to explore other territory. In 1984, you have to accept that kids have been exposed to special effects in movies much more graphic than anything they'll ever see in comics, despite the supposed special effects advantage that comics have got. They've seen brutal, basic horror of the most visceral kind — and I think that has a numbing effect. Also, I'm very conscious that we're competing for kids' money with video, with films and with **Stephen King** books — not with TOMB OF DRACULA or WEREWOLF BY NIGHT or things like that. The emphasis has to be on what *comics* can offer, compared to the films. Comics are a much more personal experience. It's the dissimilarities between comics and film that interest me more than the similarities.

STEVE: *The art in SWAMP THING is brilliant. There's nothing like it in comics today.*

ALAN: Yeah, it's excellent. There's a wrap-around quality to the art. That bit where Woodrue becomes the whole of the world's vegetation — you're right in there with him. It's a really visceral experience. I want to involve people emotionally that way.

STEVE: *Like that bit in issue #22 when Woodrue eats a piece of the SWAMP THING's body that he's just cut off? That's a damned-sight more disturbing than seeing somebody disembowelled!*

ALAN: I'm getting a whole motif of eating going on in SWAMP THING. I think it can be very disturbing. It's difficult to really frighten people.

STEVE: *Isn't the Comics Code a problem?*

ALAN: Not really. They don't like a lot of sex and a lot of violence. But if you don't fixate on sex or violence, that leaves you with a lot of room to do things.

GUY: *In common with people like Stephen King and Ramsey Campbell, you're looking 'round to find things in the real world of 1984 that frighten people — things that aren't classic horror themes — aren't you?*

ALAN: I'd tell you a contemporary horror story, but I'm going to use it as the Liz and Dennis storyline, and I don't want to give too much away. However, it's something that really happened to a cousin of mine. It's about the destruction of one human being's whole personality by another. That's an example of human evil that, to me, is more frightening than any number of demons from Hell. The investigation of human evil is something that fascinates me. If my stories are *saying* anything, it's that everybody has the capacity for evil. To pretend it's something that only happens to monsters and super-villains is evading the issue.

I want to vary the types of horror. I'm doing a story about the nuclear issue. **John Totleben's** come up with this character, "Nuke Face." He's a bum who drinks radioactive sludge. His face is this horrible smear — it'll look amazing. The story is going to be called "The Nuke Face Papers." Each section ends with a newspaper clipping, just cut out of the paper, about beaches being closed off because of nuclear waste

"I said, Let's do some close-ups where you can see the vines, the leaves, and the patches of mold." Art by Steve Bissette and John Totleben for SWAMP THING #23.

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"Over the last two decades, the innovation

being found on them, and these incredible mutated sponges growing on drums of nuclear waste in the Pacific.

GUY: *It's something Michael Moorcock's done — using newspaper clippings to refer to the ambience of the real world.*

ALAN: Lovecraft did it, too. It gives the storyline credibility. I wanted to do a story that doesn't smack of the early Seventies, that doesn't preach. I think the nuclear issue is a contemporary fear that's entered the mass subconscious, especially since the film THE DAY AFTER. Nearly everyone I know's had nuclear End-Of-The-World dreams. Horrors are not werewolves. I like to look around at the real world, and find what frightens *me*. That *frisson* of fear . . . the moment when what you assumed was a tomato stalk on the draining board suddenly runs toward your hand. That's what I'm after.

GUY: *We've talked about the way you really define your characters and the worlds your strips are set in. Everything's so thoroughly thought out — the way a writer of a novel might think things out. Are you bringing in standards of writing from outside comics?*

ALAN: A lot of emphasis has been placed on the cinematic quality of comic-book storytelling. But if you're using words, there's got to be a literary element there, as well. I don't consider myself a very good writer. Maybe I write pretty good comics, but in the broad arena I wouldn't be anything special. Even the best craftsmen in the medium, people I respect immensely — like **Will Eisner** — would be the equivalent of someone like **Damon Runyan**, in the literary field — a good, middle-range writer. But there's no reason why comics should not achieve the same effect as the *very best* books. There's nothing inherently inferior about the medium, but it will be held back until scripters are asked to be good writers. There have been a lot of great artists in comics, but the content of the stories just doesn't bear up to close scrutiny, generally speaking.

STEVE: *Even with the new generation of writer/artists, the emphasis is on the art. But then, you get something like LOVE AND ROCKETS —*

ALAN: Which is brilliant! That's what I'm talking about — that's *writing*! Take the "Sopa de Gran Pena" story — that's like **Gabriel Garcia Marquez** or **John Steinbeck**! I couldn't write like that. Well, maybe one day, but not now. And **Eddie Campbell**, he's another good one. I admire the acuteness of the observation in his stories.

STEVE: *You're talking about comics in terms of their being an art form, aren't you?*

ALAN: Yeah, but I don't want to get into justifying comics as art. That's just semantics. It *is* art, but it's not gallery art. It's cheaply available to a large number of people. I love that **McLuhanesque** ideal. To me, mass reproduction of the Mona Lisa is a bigger phenomenon than the original. My ideal is the ZAP COMIX ideal — keep every issue in print forever. I don't like the collector mentality.

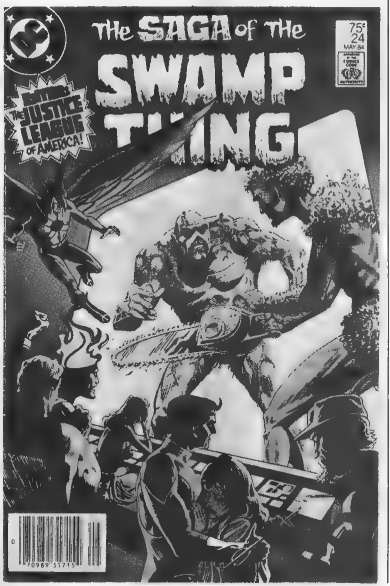
GUY: *I know you feel strongly about the range comic scripters have been drawing on getting narrower and narrower.*

ALAN: It's not an original thought of mine. It's been plain to see for years how the medium has suffered from auto-cannibalism. Over the last two decades, the innovation of **Stan Lee** has been watered down, breeding imitators, and imitators of imitators. It's inbreeding, which leads to sterility. You've got to fertilize the field by drawing on a number of influences from the culture around you. Like, I'm interested in art, and the first story in SWAMP THING is based on a **Goya** engraving, "The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters."

GUY: *You draw on musical influences a lot too — "Another Green World" in SWAMP THING #23 is an* **Eno** *album title.*

ALAN: Brian Eno is one of my biggest influences. He had no respect at all for all that precious mystique of music. He's got a purely mechanical approach to art and craft. He

The JLA as Nietzschean "Overmen."



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# of Stan Lee has been watered down."

Captain Britain flies to battle. Art by Alan Davis. **From MIGHTY WORLD OF MARVEL #8.**

said, in effect, "There are hard scientific principles at work here. If you look at them, you can work out what they are and you can use them." And he worked out ways to get the creative process going . . . I've got a box of his "Oblique Strategies", which are oracle cards. You read the phrase or word on the card, and even if it seems meaningless, you have to obey it, and try to apply it to your work. It jogs your mind into a new frame of reference, gets the creative juices flowing.

I don't subscribe to the precious attitude toward art, where you sit and wait for the Muse to settle on your brow. You can't just wait for an inspiration — not when you're doing it for a living. I mean, **Van Gogh** could, but he ended up penniless in a looney bin. If you wait for the Muse to fly in your window, you'll wait for weeks — and she'll be off down the road somewhere screwing around with some fifteen-year-old kid who's just written his first poem about the evils of modern warfare! *(Laughter.)* You've got to develop a mechanical approach, think about what you're doing, and experiment. For example, you've got a strand of narrative in the words, and a separate strand in the pictures. What happens if you divorce the two?

STEVE: *I've noticed that you let the pictures shoulder a lot of the burden of what is normally left to expository dialogue. But in your stuff, quite often the words don't really relate to the pictures in anything but an* ironic *way — they're telling the same story but . . .*

ALAN: . . . from different sides. Yeah, I like to do that. In that episode where V's storming the TV studios in **WARRIOR** 15, there's no dialogue at all. There's just the sound from the TV monitors — the dialogue from three or four different TV shows — a sitcom, a documentary — and the action on the TV interrelates with what V's doing, so you get V killing someone accompanied by a bit of canned laughter from the TV. I like that juxtaposition. I don't know why it works, but it does. The connection is somehow made in the reader's own mind.

STEVE: *This ties in with something I wanted to ask you about. Coincidence has been abused and overused as a plot device in comics, but you seem to be consciously avoiding it.*

ALAN: I'm interested in coincidence as a phenomenon. I do use it, but as a storytelling device. The juxtaposition we were just talking about is synchronicity really. And I use it for scene-changing. Much of comics writing comes down to finding interesting ways to change scenes, and I use overlapping dialogue a lot. That relies on the coincidence of what people are saying being relevant to a scene miles away, so the words link the scenes.

STEVE: *It binds the story together without affecting the integrity of things.*

ALAN'S DAUGHTER: Dinner's nearly up!

ALAN: Are you real men or do you eat quiche? *(Laughter.)*

(Alan, Steve and Guy adjourn to eat an excellent bleu-cheese quiche cooked for us by Phyllis. Alan shows the Japanese comics — the Wolf and Baby-Carriage books that Steve Moore gave him for Christmas — and Steve and Guy remark on how they influenced

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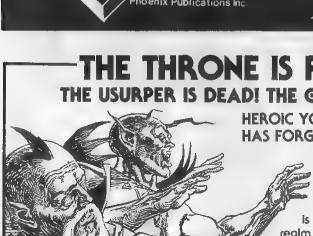

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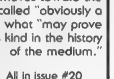

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"I feel I can't do anything with a character until I've destroyed him and rebuilt him."

RONIN. This conversation continues as they return to the tape recorder . . .)

ALAN: Those Japanese comics have very simple stories, but they're given a lot of weight by the way they're told. Me and **Steve Moore** like to talk about the differences between our styles. Steve is very action-oriented — he likes to have a lot happening all the time. And it works. But, for me, I like building up situations and characters so that when something does happen — even if it's only a little thing — it has that weight and that power. One of the big problems with comics is they're geared towards the superhero style. And as **Paul Neary** once said, the superhero is geared towards hyperbole. You start off with the greatest superhero of all time, so he has to fight the greatest villain of all time. Next issue you need an even greater villain, and so on, until you have a villain who eats planets. And when you're using that character every few months, it becomes *commonplace* for people to eat planets. The more stepped-up it is cosmically, the less effective it becomes.

I'm trying in my own way to put some of the mystique back into superheroes — the majesty they had for me as a kid. I want to make them less commonplace.

GUY: *For example, in SWAMP THING #24, the Justice League is not referred to by name, nor are the individual heroes. You call them the "Overpeople," which refers back to what we were saying about MARVELMAN and the Nietzsche connection.*

ALAN: I asked Steve and John to draw them with their faces shadowed — make them a bit more mysterious.

STEVE: *It's lovely work. Hawkman looks really great for a change.*

GUY: *Do you send your artist a full script?*

ALAN: Yeah, very much so. I make suggestions as to the camera angles, the lighting, the background, the mood, sometimes the color, the posture, and the body language. I try to put everything in there. But I make sure that the artists know that if they've got a better idea, they're free to use it. After all, they've got better visual imaginations than me. I provide them with a springboard, so if they're facing a blank sheet of paper after a really heavy weekend — their families have been wiped out by Hurricane Tracy or something — *(laughter)* — they've got somewhere to start.

STEVE: *You leave a lot of the storytelling up to the artists, don't you?*

ALAN: I do put a real burden on them. But now I've learned to gear my stories to an individual artist's strong points. I'd like to make one thing very clear. It annoys me when people talk about "*Alan Moore's* V FOR VENDETTA" or "*Alan Moore's* MARVELMAN," and I'm not going to enjoy hearing about "*Alan Moore's* SWAMP THING." I can't claim to be an individual artist in my own right. The end result,the strip you see on the page, is the meeting between me and the artist. That's where the creation is. I've been incredibly lucky with the artists I've worked with.

GUY: *Are there any artists you're particularly looking forward to working with — perhaps some of the British artists you haven't collaborated with yet, like Bolland, McMahon or O'Neill?*

ALAN: They're pretty much at the top of the list. But I'd be interested to work with anyone new, to explore the different strong points of any artist's work. There are only two kinds of artists I wouldn't like to work with.The first kind consists of artists who write better than I do — **Eisner, Miller, Eddie Campbell.** The second kind would be anyone who thought their art more important than the stories. I don't consider my stories more important than the art. It's got to be equal.

Alan Moore — the real Marvelman?

* 1984 A. Davis

This is the place.

It breathes. It eats. And, at night, beneath a crawling ground fog with the luster of vaporized pearl, it dreams; dreams while tiny predators stage a nightmare ballet in the sharp black grass. It is a living thing. It has a soul. It has a face.

At night you can almost see it.

At night you can almost imagine what it might look like if the Swamp were boiled down to its essence, and distilled into corporeal form; if all the muck, all the forgotten muskrat bones, and all the luscious decay would rise up and wade on two legs through the shallows; if the Swamp had a spirit and that spirit walked like a man . . .

At night, you can almost imagine.

You can stare into those places where the evening has pooled beneath the distant trees, and glimpse an ambiguous shifting of the darkness: something large, large and slow, its movements solemn and inevitable, heavy with the clotted, sodden weed that forms its flesh. Its skeleton of tortured root creaks with each funereal pace, protesting at the damp and sullen weight. Within their sockets its eyes float like blood-poppies in puddles of ink.

You can inhale through flared nostrils, drinking in its musk, green and pungent. There is the delicate scent of mosses and lichens adorning its flanks. There is the dry and acrid aftertaste of the pinmold that spreads across its shoulders, fanning out in a dull gray rash.

You can stand alone in the blind darkness and know that were you to raise your arm, reaching out to its fullest extremity, your fingertips would brush with something wet, something supple and resilient.

Something moving.

You shouldn't have come here.

This is the place.

This is the story.

The Saga of the Swamp Thing

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"Even the best inkers cannot do

JOSE LUIS GARCIA LOPEZ

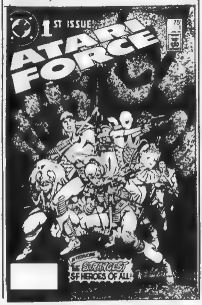
Long respected by professionals for his realistic-looking, expressive artwork in sundry DC comic books, happily "self-exiled" to sunny Miami as a long-distance (but valued) member of DC's Special Projects division, Jose Luis Garcia Lopez has returned to Manhattan and broken through to widespread recognition with his work on DC's space-war graphic novel, STAR RAIDERS.

When Lesley Benjamin-Aull and I met with Jose at the Warner Communications building (home of COMICS INTERVIEW's unofficial Manhattan office, the Burger & Brew), Senior Lopez was accompanied by his friend and editor, Andy Helfer. Jose and Andy are a study in contrast and camaraderie: Jose, soft-spoken, self-effacing, a bit laconic, his Spanish-accented words carefully chosen and enunciated; Andy, a native New Yorker, self-assured, effervescent, and quick on the verbal draw — ready, willing and able to supply Jose with an unfamiliar English word or help him through a troublesome phrase. They obviously like and trust each other, and work comfortably as a team, both in person and in masterminding — with Gerry Conway — the new monthly SF comic from DC, ATARI FORCE . . .

DAK: *Before you returned to New York City to work on STAR RAIDERS, you were living in Miami. What brought you back?*

JOSE LUIS GARCIA LOPEZ: Well, it's true there were certain things that I liked. For example, I was working only four hours a day and the rest of the time I was spending on the beach!

"The response to ATARI FORCE has been phenomenal," says editor Andy Helfer. "I can't believe how many letters we got on the first issue — at least four hundred, which I think is tremendous."



LESLEY BENJAMIN-AULL: *That sounds good. I don't know why you came back to New York City!*

JOSE: I wonder, sometimes. *(Laughter.)*

ANDY HELFER: Well, when Jose was living in Miami, I was instructed by **Jenette Kahn** and **Joe Orlando** to mention coming back to New York at least one time per phone conversation. That may have had something to do with his return.

JOSE: In Miami, I was very disciplined and kept a regular schedule. I could set my own hours, because the editor was in New York City. But here, he can call me anytime —

ANDY: — and drive you crazy! *(Laughter.)*

JOSE: Yeah. And I have to go down to the office to see him, and lose time.

ANDY: ATARI FORCE is the first series Jose's done in quite a while, so that's a different kind of discipline for him than when he was doing special projects for us in Miami, such as the DC STYLE GUIDE.

DAK: *What kind of material did you work on way back in Argentina?*

JOSE: I did adaptations of Spanish classics into comic-book form. I also did a character called "Roland," which was my first

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justice to the pencils of another artist."

The Huska © 1983 Atlet, Inc.

chance to do a character on a regular basis, not just individual stories. I did that character for two years — twenty-four stories, fifteen pages each. I also did my own coloring. Doing the strip was a good experience. Before doing it, I didn't know how many panels I could do a day, and whether or not I could do them fast enough to keep on schedule — I was slow and was still trying to learn. With that strip I learned a lot — including the knowledge that I could possibly earn a living in another country.

DAK: *What kind of material was being published in Argentina then?*

JOSE: When I started in the field, there were at least three or four good companies doing different material, most of it reprinted from North America. Strips like FLASH GORDON, RIP KIRBY, BUZ SAWYER and PRINCE VALIANT. They were big influences on me.

DAK: *Would you say there's a lot of Hal Foster and Alex Raymond influence in your artwork?*

JOSE: Foster, yes, but I think **Raymond** more. **Roy Crane,** too. Of course, there were some Argentinean artists doing good things. And a lot of Italian artists moved from Italy to Argentina and created several comic books with Argentinean artists that were very, very good — well-known in South America and, later, in Europe. One of those was SGT. KIRK, which I did for the **Hugo Pratt** company. I also did some work for Charlton when I was in Argentina.

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Jose Luis Garcia Lopez
Occupation: Artist
Born: 26 March 1948 — Galicia, Spain
Residence: Long Island City, NY
Training: Attended art school in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Also took a correspondence course in cartooning.
Credits: ATARI FORCE, STAR RAIDERS, TARZAN, WEIRD WAR, HERCULES UNBOUND, BATMAN VERSUS THE HULK, various special projects for DC (including the DC STYLE GUIDE) and numerous Argenti comic-books.
Hobbies and Interests: Movies, beachcombing, and reading. I read almost anything, from philosophy to science fiction. I could be reading a work of political science one day and a study of Eastern religions the next.
Pet Peeve: Not being able to ink more of my own work.

I would send the work to Charlton's South American agent and he would send it to the editor — who, at that time, was **Dick Giordano.**

DAK: *What kind of things did you do for Charlton?*

JOSE: First, a few pages of monster stories that the agent told me to submit. They liked them and sent me a script, and from then on, for about five years, I did romance stories, war stories, and westerns.

DAK: *How did you come to be interested in doing comics in the first place?*

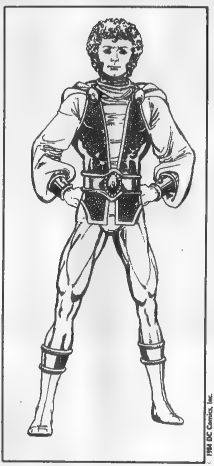
JOSE: By reading the American comics available in Argentina, as well as some of the Argentinean strips. I lived in Argentina since I was four years old, and got most of my education — in things both good and bad — in Buenos Aires. When I was eleven years old, my sister bought me a correspondence course from the Continental School, and they taught me to draw cartoons — cowgirls, soldiers, things like that. When I was about twelve, I took my samples to the publishing companies and they told me there were a lot of things I didn't know — about the ink, about the brush, the pen, the kind of paper I would have to use, and so on. When I was thirteen, I finally got something published. Then, I got a regular job with a publishing company.

LESLEY: *What kind of a job?*

THE GEORGE PEREZ INTERVIEW!

IN THE 50th ISSUE OF

AMAZING HEROES™



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Join Denny O'Neil and Mike W. Barr as they discuss the most perfect super-hero created for comics: THE BATMAN! The article is generously illustrated with the art of Neal Adams, who drew many of the O'Neil Batman stories.

Issue #50 also looks at statistics taken from *The Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe*. Find out how Marvel Earth compares with "real" Earth as comics critic Heidi MacDonald takes a humorous and insightful look at what life is like for the world's favorite super-heroes.

JEMM, SON OF SATURN, the new DC mini-series by Greg Potter, Gene Colan, and Klaus Janson is previewed in this issue as well.

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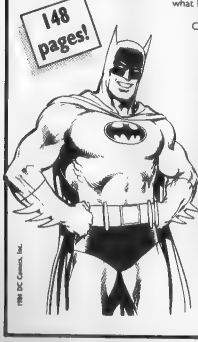

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"I didn't want to do SUPERMAN."

JOSE: Well, I did everything but collect the money. I was drawing, lettering, coloring. We were publishing foreign strips, and not only had to translate them into Spanish but reassemble the panels — so I was doing paste-ups, as well. But I still knew I had a lot to learn about comics, so when I was sixteen I decided to go to art school. There was a door of opportunity, but I knew I would never be able to open it, without further knowledge.

DAK: *Why did you come to the United States?*

JOSE: Even though I was earning good money and getting great satisfaction from my work, the political situation was only so-so — *mezzo-mezzo. (Laughter.)*

LESLEY: *Was it dangerous?*

JOSE: It was dangerous for people involved in politics. I wasn't involved in anything political, but I didn't like the direction things were taking. So, in 1974, I came to New York City. The first thing I did was take an apartment, and friends told me, "No! First get a job, and *then* get an apartment!" *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *Where did you go for a job?*

JOSE: The first place I wanted to go was DC, but the address I had was their old address. I went there and the doorman told me, "DC is at Rockefeller Plaza." I went in the right direction but I couldn't find Rockefeller Plaza. So I called **Luis Dominguez** for directions.

DAK: *You knew him?*

JOSE: I had known of him when I was in Argentina. I used to copy his work. *(Laughter.)* When I called, I told him I wanted to go to DC but couldn't find it. He told me to stay where I was and he would meet me. He had to go to Western and DC, so he met me on the corner of Second Avenue and one of the crosstown streets. He took me to Western, and they gave me a script to do. Then he took me to DC, and they gave me a script, too. He had to go to Marvel, and he wanted me to go there with him, but I said, "No, please, I have too much work already." *(Laughter.)* So I started working for both Western and DC. Now I work exclusively for DC.

DAK: *Do you have a contract with DC?*

JOSE: No, I'm freelance.

ANDY: Shhhh!

JOSE: I just have always had a good working relationship with the people at DC.

DAK: *Andy is glowing.* (Laughter.)

JOSE: I only worked for Western one year. It was a little boring, working for them. There was no excitement in the kind of work they wanted me to do.

DAK: *What kind of work did you start out doing for DC?*

Garcia Lopez art from the DC STYLE GUIDE.

JOSE: I did five pages of something called, I think, "The Secret Life of Clark Kent." Then I did a Civil War story for WEIRD WAR, which **Dick Giordano** was editing.

DAK: *Were you pencilling or inking?*

JOSE: Both, for the first few stories — which is what I prefer. The first story on which I did pencils only was for HERCULES UNBOUND.

ANDY: Which **Wally Wood** inked.

DAK: *You prefer to ink your own pencils?*

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"I lost the spontaneity that comes through

JOSE: Yes, I feel that is the best way. Even the best inkers cannot do justice to another artist's pencils. The penciller does not have as much control over his art when he hands it over to another artist to ink. It's like having a son and entrusting the nurturing of that son to other parents.

ANDY: I remember when we got **Ricardo Villagran** as inker of ATARI FORCE. I was trying to get **Dick Giordano** to ink it, but God knows Dick is busy enough, nowadays. When I saw **Villagran's** samples I loved his ink-lines, detailed but not overly-so, and I asked Jose what he thought about **Villagran** inking the book. Jose said, "Next to me he would be the best." *(Laughter.)*

JOSE: Villagran is a very famous artist in South America and Europe. I am not saying my inking is better than his. In fact, since it is the standard practice here for one artist to pencil and a different artist to ink — because it is more economical in terms of time — I have had not had much chance to practice inking, and that is the only way to improve. In South America and Europe, it is standard for the artist to ink his own work, which is what I always did in Argentina. Here, that is too slow. ATARI FORCE would be bi-monthly

instead of monthly. But I do think my art is better when I ink it myself.

DAK: *It's interesting that you feel so strongly about inking your own pencils. When I took over the writing of TARZAN at DC from Gerry Conway and saw your pencils, I was really amazed by them. I had never realized your pencils had so much power. Something does seem to get lost between the pencils and the final, inked page.*

ANDY: It's interesting that you feel that way, Dave, because I think what gets lost in Jose's work, when someone else inks, is just the opposite of power. I think the sensitivity gets lost.

DAK: *Did you have any difficulty adjusting to American comics?*

JOSE: Some. I had problems adjusting to super-heroes, because the work I did in Argentina was more realistic. For a while, JONAH HEX was the only work of mine I liked.

LESLEY: *Any trouble adjusting to life in New York City?*

JOSE: No, no trouble. I find most big cities the same. The only emotional problem is that once a year I go back for a visit to Argentina, and then have to say good-bye to my family again.

DAK: *Why did you leave New York City and move to Miami?*

JOSE: I was tired of the cold here. I had gone to Miami once on vacation and it was nice. So I moved there for a while and worked for DC by mail.

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the art when you ink your own pencils."

DAK: *Andy, you mentioned Jose was doing special projects in Miami, including the DC STYLE GUIDE. Can you tell us about the STYLE GUIDE?*

ANDY: Basically, it's a book filled with various drawings of all the DC characters. It's in a looseleaf format so that we can add new characters every once in a while, like the new Luthor or Brainiac.

DAK: *What is the purpose of the book?*

ANDY: It was designed as a guide to the licensors who create products using DC characters. There were fifteen or twenty different representations of, say, Superman floating around — all done by various artists — so we decided to create a "house look" by getting one artist to do various representations of all the characters. Let's say a licensor wants to do a pillow-case with Superman all over it. He can photocopy the Superman figures from this guide and mix and match them to get a nice design for his pillow-case. **Mary Moebus,** our licensing manager, in conjection with **Joe Orlando** and **Jenette Kahn,** selected Jose to be the artist because everybody at DC always thought that he did the best Superman. So Jose spent about nine months doing maybe a hundred-and-fifty pages of characters and designs that have since been used all over the place on various licensed products.

DAK: *What else did you do in Miami? I mean, besides sitting out on the beach.* (Laughter.)

JOSE: I did BATMAN VS. THE HULK — which was different, because I had never done any Marvel characters before. It was fun.

ANDY: Then STAR RAIDERS came along. Everybody got mad at me when I wanted Jose to do it.

DAK: *Why?*

ANDY: What happened was that the editors at DC were told not to "steal" people from the regular titles to do graphic novels. Initially, we were very upset, because most of the artists we had known and loved worked on the regular books, so they couldn't be used on STAR RAIDERS. But then we realized Jose wasn't doing any regular titles — he was doing the STYLE GUIDE! So then everybody — especially **Mike Barr** — said, "No, no! That's not fair! We want him for our projects!" But **Joe Orlando** said, "Yeah — use Jose." We both thought he'd do a good job coloring it, too.

JOSE: Years ago, I showed Joe a small color sketch I had done, and I suppose he remembered it. I was in Miami, finishing the STYLE GUIDE, wanting to do something different and wondering what I was

Garcia Lopez pencils for ATARI FORCE #6.

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Andy: "Everybody got mad at me when I wanted Jose to do STAR RAIDERS."

going to do next, when Andy called me about STAR RAIDERS.

DAK: *So you finally gave in and came back to New York. How did you work on STAR RAIDERS — full-script, or from plots?*

JOSE: The first twenty pages was done full-script.

ANDY: Elliot S! Maggin, was writing ten panels to a page, and Jose wanted to open up the artwork more, so they shifted to plot. You'll notice that the graphics become more abstract in composition as the story goes on.

DAK: *Do you prefer working from plots rather than full scripts?*

JOSE: Working from plots takes more work, but it is better for me. Because I feel free to do more things — or less things. *(Laughter.)*

DAK: *You were already working from plots when I scripted TARZAN from your pencils.*

JOSE: I didn't remember that!

DAK: *Andy, can you tell us about the origin of ATARI FORCE?*

ANDY: Well, the inside story is told in the letters section of the second issue. **Gerry Conway** explains where the concept came from and how he got involved in it. In a nutshell, Atari and DC came to the conclusion — not an incorrect one, in my opinion — that many of the people who played video games were also reading comics. So they decided that DC would do "In-Pack" comics to be included, free, with Atari video games. **Dick Giordano, Gerry Conway, Roy Thomas** and **Ross Andru** worked with the Atari people to come up with the original Atari Force group of characters. But so many people who didn't know comics were involved in the project that it didn't jell that well. Then Dick left Special Projects to become managing editor, and **Joe Orlando** gave Atari Force to me. **Jenette Kahn** wasn't too excited by the Atari Force created for the In-Packs, and wanted to have a new Atari Force star in a regular monthly comic book. In the fifth In-Pack, Gerry and I very conveniently and quickly wrapped up the saga of the *first* Force, and the sixth In-Pack was scheduled to be the premiere of the *new* Force. By that time Ross had moved on to something else. I was very impressed with Jose's work on STAR RAIDERS and asked him if he wanted to be the artist for the new ATARI FORCE.

JOSE: At first, I wasn't too excited. I wanted to do another graphic novel. I had learned to do a lot of things with STAR RAIDERS and felt I could do even better with a new graphic novel. Andy convinced me it would be better to do a monthly comic book.

ANDY: Personally, I think that you have to have monthly exposure to get any attention.

JOSE: Once I decided to do a monthly comic, I knew I didn't want to do SUPERMAN or BATMAN. There's not much you can do with the *look* of those characters. They always have to look the same.

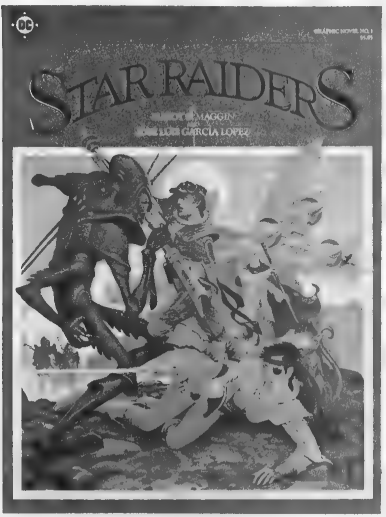
ANDY: Unless you have the clout of a **Neal Adams,** changing Batman's ears.

JOSE: When I drew Superman, he always had to have the spit-curl. Here, I would have a chance to design the characters and change them, possibly, later on.

LESLEY: *Had you ever designed characters before?*

JOSE: Yes, for STAR RAIDERS, HERCULES UNBOUND and, of course, all the minor supporting characters that appear in almost every story. With ATARI FORCE, Gerry and Andy came up with the ideas for the major characters, and I came up with the graphic design for them.

ANDY: We three went into a conference room. Gerry was snorting and wheezing with a bad cold, Jose was sitting there doodling, and we were all shooting stuff back and forth. The concept for the new ATARI FORCE just came together — in two days, we had the whole cast of characters! So I presented Jenette and Dick and Joe and **Paul Levitz** with the characters. And — miracle of miracles —



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Helfer: "Jose did the best Superman."

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everything was approved. Everybody said, "Let's do it! Let's go for it!"

DAK: *Jose, how are you and Gerry working together on this book?*

JOSE: Gerry sends Andy the plots, then Andy and I discuss them before I take them home, so he can explain any points I may not understand.

DAK: *Do you ever change anything in the plot?*

JOSE: No. Gerry is giving me a map, and I follow that map. But at the same time, I try to look at other roads. If I can put something in that I think belongs, I do and hope that Gerry picks it up and does something with it.

ANDY: Gerry is really very good at that.

JOSE: But I try to follow his lead, because he is the writer and was the first to come up with the ideas.

DAK: *Do you feel any urge to write, yourself?*

JOSE: Well, I can draw better than I write — so I think I will stick to drawing. It's very difficult to write.

DAK: *I'll agree with that!* (Laughter.) *When you have the plot, Jose, how do you begin?*

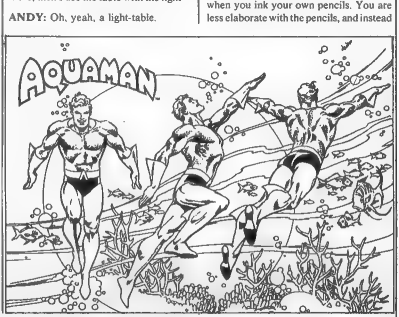
JOSE: I assemble the whole scene first, and decide how many panels go on this page, how many go on that page, and so forth. When I have that figured out, I do sketches on tracing paper, the same size as the page will be. I try to think not in terms of individual panels but in whole pages. I want to get something visually exciting on the page while at the same time telling the story. When I get a page layout I like, I finish the sketch a little more, then I use the table with the light —

ANDY: Oh, yeah, a light-table.

JOSE: — and trace the sketches of the panels onto regular paper.

LESLEY: *What if you are inking it, too?*

JOSE: Then I don't tell so much in the pencils. I leave a lot of things to improvisation and the feeling of the moment in the inking. I believe that's what I lost working so many years with just pencils — the spontaneity that comes through the art, when you ink your own pencils. You are less elaborate with the pencils, and instead



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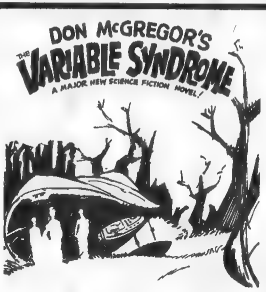

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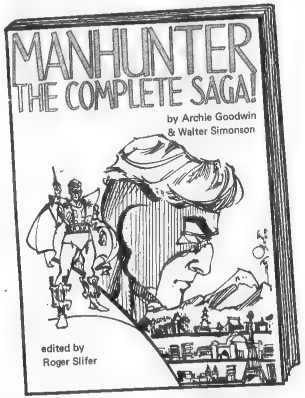

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"JONAH HEX was my only work I liked."

do a lot of improvisation with the inks. If, at the moment you are inking, you feel you need a strong line here, or a black there, you just do it. Sometimes it doesn't work, but when it does, it looks — how you say? — "spontaneous."

DAK: *I get the impression that's how Joe Kubert inks. Are you ever going to convince DC to let you do both pencils and inks?*

JOSE: Convincing them would be no problem. The problem would be the deadlines. I am slow doing both.

ANDY: Jose does pencil and ink the covers, although I realize that's not the same thing as pencilling and inking the story pages. Jose did ink issues #4 and #5 of ATARI FORCE.

JOSE: But that's also not the same thing because I was inking another artist — **Ross Andru.**

DAK: *How was that — inking another artist?*

JOSE: Interesting, because some of the characters in #'s 4 and 5 are from the old ATARI FORCE and were created by **Ross Andru,** and some are from the new Force and were created by me, and there are definite differences in style between Ross and me. But I think it worked perfectly.

ANDY: I should point out that people may say, "Ah — Jose fell behind and needed two fill-in issues!"

DAK: *I hear a "but" coming.*

ANDY: What happened, basically, is that issue #'s 4 and 5 were originally planned as In-Packs. They were supposed to introduce the new Force, but when the Atari In-Pack project ended a bit abruptly, we had this story on our hands. We decided that instead of using the two-parter to launch the new ATARI FORCE monthly comic, we'd really get into the characters first. So we spent the first three issues building up to this climactic episode, the two-parter in issue #'s 4 and 5 created for the In-Packs. This is especially appropriate, because that episode introduces — or re-introduces — the original Force. ATARI FORCE is the only comic I know where the fourth issue was done before the first issue!

DAK: *So you knew where you were going with the story.*

ANDY: Exactly. And we created a lot of building-blocks for issues #'s 4 and 5 along the way.

Above and opposite: Garcia Lopez art from the DC STYLE GUIDE.

LESLEY: *What kind of response have you been getting?*

ANDY: At this point, I can only tell by the letters we've received — and response has been phenomenal. I can't believe how many letters we got on the first issue — at least 400, which I think is tremendous.

DAK: *It is! Jose, when you get the finished book, do you read it?*

JOSE: No, I don't. The last one I read was STAR RAIDERS.

ANDY: You didn't read ATARI FORCE?

JOSE: Well, I am trying to get in the habit of reading it . . .

ANDY: You should! *(Laughter.)* I gave you so many copies of the first issue you could read *one*.

JOSE: Well, I have to read the *next* issues to get acquainted with the new characters.

ANDY: I know you read the third issue, because you told me about the mistake.

LESLEY: *What mistake was that?*

ANDY: We have these "Fact File"

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"I like to show not only fights but emotions."

On this page: panels from ATARI FORCE #6.

Garcia Lopez pencils and Villagran inks.

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pages in the back of the book, a kind of dossier on each of the characters with statistic boxes showing height, weight, and so on. Gerry did all these statistics in metric — weights in kilos, heights in meters — and one of the characters who is supposed to be three-and-a-half feet tall is nine feet tall! A few days ago, on the phone with Jose, I said, "I have some good news: **Dave Kraft** is going to interview us for COMICS INTERVIEW." He said, "That's very nice. But I have some bad news: You screwed up the measurements." *(Laughter.)*

LESLEY: *Do you two communicate in Spanish?*

JOSE: No, Andy doesn't speak Spanish.

ANDY: Well, I do understand some Spanish — but I shouldn't tell anybody 'cause when Jose talks to some guy in Spanish, he doesn't think I understand. *(Laughter.)* I still can't believe Jose doesn't read ATARI FORCE.

JOSE: I can't read too many comic books, because I am busy drawing them!

DAK: *What comics do you read?*

JOSE: AMERICAN FLAGG, THRILLER . . . I read the first and third issues of RONIN . . . I don't know what to say, in order not to offend anybody. *(Laughter.)*

LESLEY: *Do you think there's something in your Spanish background, or your knowledge of South American comic books, that's reflected in your artwork, making it a little bit different from American artwork?*

JOSE: Perhaps, in the storytelling. I like to show not only fights, but expressions and emotions. I like to do sequences where you don't have a lot of action — but can show a lot of feeling, in the expressions of the characters. In a soap opera, the characters sit and talk — but there is no emotion. Compare the cinema of Argentina and Europe with the films of North America. The American film is mostly action, beautifully done. In the French or Italian films, or the new Spanish cinema, the camera takes its time to look at the characters from different angles. It's a different style — more lyrical. That's what I'd like to contribute to American comics.

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"The things coming out now are a lot worse than the EC horror comics."

JACK DAVIS

The work of veteran cartoonist-illustrator Jack Davis is among the most widely-seen comic art of our time. Besides his work for EC's horror comics of the Fifties, and for MAD Magazine, Jack has reached millions through his TIME Magazine covers, his record-album illustrations, and his advertising graphics. In one of the major ad campaigns of recent New York City history, hordes of Big Apple "strap-hangers" viewed Jack's large, full-color subway-wall posters for WNBC's manic morning disk-jockey, Don Imus. In the early Sixties, myriads more saw his memorable, celebrity-filled poster for the motion-picture comedy epic, IT'S A MAD, MAD, MAD WORLD. Marvel assistant editor and University of Georgia alumnus Jim Massara talked to Jack when they were both in Athens, Georgia, for one of the Bulldogs' hometown games. . .

JIM MASSARA: *I was looking at a reprint of one of the old EC comics the other day, and it featured a profile of you that mentioned having your car stolen when you first came to New York City.*

JACK DAVIS: Well, New York is not the place to have a car to begin with. I'd come up from Georgia and was working for the NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE, inking the comic strip THE SAINT, by Leslie Charteris. When I went to work each day, I'd put the car in a parking place which cost me as much to rent as an apartment. One night, I had a date with someone living near Central Park — a real nice neighborhood off Fifth Avenue — and went into her apartment to pick her up. When I came out, the car was gone. They found it in Buffalo, and I had to go up there to get it.

JIM: *What a way to start life in New York. Why did you move north?*

JACK: All the syndicates and major publishers are in New York. Atlanta didn't have any of that.

JIM: *Did you have any work waiting there for you or did you come up blind?*

JACK: I came up to go to the Art Students League at night and look for work during the day. I only stayed at the League for two or three months, and then I got the job inking THE SAINT.

JIM: *And from there you went to EC?*

JACK: Right. I had been to the syndicates, mostly, and my work wasn't quite ready for them. Then I went down to EC. They didn't have MAD then, just the horror books. **Al Feldstein,** who is now editor of MAD, was the editor back then, and he gave me my first assignment for EC. It was something about a werewolf.

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Jack Davis
Occupation: Cartoonist
Born: Atlanta, GA — 1924
Training: Summer courses at the High Museum of Art in Atlanta; art classes at University of Georgia; Art Students League in New York City.
Credits: TALES FROM THE CRYPT, MAD, RAWHIDE KID, HUMBUG, TRUMP, TV GUIDE, and numerous advertisements, movie posters, and magazine illustrations.

JIM: *What was in your portfolio when you brought it up there?*

JACK: Well, I had drawn some strips, which were bad, and then I had tried to do some comic-book pages. They weren't too good either, but **Al Feldstein** liked them, and from then on I started working as hard as I could.

JIM: *I've heard many stories of how fast you were as a cartoonist. Were you always that fast, or did you develop that speed trying to stay ahead of the cost of living in New York City?*

JACK: No, I think I've always been able to work fairly fast. Everything I did was fairly loose. I was not a tight renderer.

JIM: *When you were working back in the '50s, which kind of story did you like drawing best?*

JACK: I enjoyed doing cowboys, I liked the war comics and I liked the horror bit — I was always fascinated with Frankenstein and Dracula and all that when I was a kid.

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"You sometimes don't realize the scope

JIM: *How did you feel about some of that really gruesome stuff that EC did?*

JACK: I think it was pretty bad. At the time, I didn't realize how bad it was — but now that I look back, I know it was. You sometimes don't realize the scope and influence of what you're doing.

JIM: *Well, I don't know of anybody who read it as a child who grew up to be an axe murderer.*

JACK: No, the things that are coming out now — God! — are a lot worse. *(Laughter.)* But I look back at my EC work now and I'm not too proud of it. However, everybody has their own tastes.

JIM: *How were those old EC comics put together? I know both Feldstein and Harvey Kurtzman had different methods of working.*

JACK: The only thing I would do is illustrate. I would come in and pick up a page that had already been lettered. With **Feldstein** I would read the script the way the writer had written it, and he would describe what should be in each panel. Now, with **Harvey Kurtzman**, he went into a lot more detail. He would even rough out a layout. He was an extremely good artist — one of the greatest, I think, with a story. It's too bad he doesn't do a lot more than he does. He went about things a different way. He would go over his stuff, read it with you, and always dramatize it for you.

JIM: *Which way did you feel more comfortable with? It seems like Al Feldstein would have been a little bit looser.*

JACK: He was. Harvey was more like a coach. He could talk you into something, get you excited about it. They both had their points.

JIM: *Why was Leroy lettering used on the horror books?*

JACK: It was a mechanical way of doing it, and doing it very, very fast. The letterers could turn out a lot that way. But Harvey didn't do it that way. He had **Ben Oda** letter most of his stuff.

JIM: *Of all the stories you did for EC back in the '50s did you have any favorites?*

JACK: There were so many that I had no one favorite. And, like I said, I enjoyed doing the war bit and the westerns. I wish I could have done more westerns, but there just wasn't that much call for them.

JIM: *You did a little bit of writing, too, right?*

JACK: I wrote one or two stories. Back then it just was a matter of doing what you wanted to do. One was a cowboy story, the other . . . well, it's been so far back that I can't remember.

JIM: *What were your favorite cartoons and comics when you were young?*

JACK: When I was very young, I was interested in drawing the simple things, like Little Henry, Popeye or Mickey Mouse. When I got a little older, I thought that **Alex Raymond** and **Hal Foster** were just the greatest. I once wrote **Hal Foster** a fan letter and he sent me a whole full Sunday page.

JACK: The original art?

JACK: Yes. I still have it.

JIM: *Was there a point when it occurred to you that you might be a little better at drawing than the rest of the kids, and that you might like to pursue it as a career?*

JACK: No, not then. I think in grammar school and high school I was about the only one who drew. I look back now and compare what I did with what some kids are doing now, and I don't think I had any real great talent.

JIM: *Well, that may be debatable. In any case, from there you went on to high school — and then got detoured . . .*

JACK: . . . by World War II. When I was in the Navy I spent two years in Pensacola, and I drew for the naval air station paper. Then I went to Guam, and I had a comic strip there that I did every day. It was a single-panel thing for the *Navy News* called "The Boondocker."

JIM: *Did you write it yourself?*

JACK: Yep. I wrote it and drew it myself. It was pretty bad. *(Laughter.)* I never could write. It was just a gag-a-day thing, based on situations that happened while I was over there. It was distributed all over the islands to all the naval personnel. It was good exposure.

JIM: *Then you came back to Georgia?*

JACK: Right. I went to the University of Georgia on the G.I. Bill and majored in art. I also took some journalism courses.

JIM: *The other day I mentioned to Marie Severin, who was an EC colorist, that I was interviewing you, and she suggested I ask about how your art training influenced your color sense, which she always liked.*

JACK: When I was at the University of

This 1950 editorial cartoon for the University of Georgia newspaper, THE RED AND THE BLACK, foreshadows Jack's EC horror-comics art.

* 1950 THE RED AND THE BLACK

and influence of what you're doing."

Georgia I had some good art classes with Lamar Dodd, one with water colors. I also had a very good course in oil painting, which helped me not so much with oil painting but in learning color. I've never really worked in anything but water colors. Once in awhile, I'll put some opaque in when I'm starting to finish up, but it's pen and ink with brush, mostly.

JIM: *What was University life like in the '40s, and how would you compare it to what's going on here now?*

JACK: Things haven't changed much. Those were some of the best years of my life, the years I had at Georgia. I lived in the SAE fraternity house. Back in those days the fraternity house was kept really well, and they waited on you, and it was just fantastic. It was a good way of living. I enjoyed the social life, the football, and just the camaraderie, the brotherhood. When I come back here, I still see that.

JIM: *What about the infamous* Bullsheet? *What was that, and how did it happen?*

JACK: Georgia Tech had the *Georgia Tech Yellowjackets*, which was sort of a humor magazine, with risque jokes and things like that. Well, the University of Georgia had never had anything like that. They had a legitimate campus magazine, and they did have *The Red and Black*, the school newspaper, but nothing like the *Yellowjacket*. So some of my frat brothers and I decided to come out with our own off-campus publication, not political or anything, but just something with risque jokes and cartoons. We got local ads to pay for having it printed, and the thing took off and made money and got to be so big that we couldn't handle it. Some of the guys were getting ready to graduate, so we just dropped it. It was sold off-campus, and we got a lot of the jokes from an automotive parts catalogue called *Parts Pups* that featured off-color jokes as filler. We'd just cut 'em out and paste 'em in.

JIM: *You know they have a copy of the* Bullsheet *in the University of Georgia library.*

JACK: Oh, no! *(Laughter.)* Bad stuff, really bad stuff.

JIM: *Did you ever use any of that stuff in your portfolio later?*

JACK (emphatically): No!

JIM: *You did some work for* The Red and Black, *too. How did you end up there?*

Self-portrait of the artist as a young man. Above: an example of Jack's work for the University of Georgia Bulldogs.

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"I am amazed at the talent I see now."

JACK: Oh, just because of the art department, and I drew cartoons. I did one a week.

JIM: *Weren't you doing work for the ATLANTA JOURNAL at about the same time?*

JACK: I had a summer job there. I did sports cartoons. Also, there was a murder case, and I went to the court and drew pictures. They made front page, and that was a big thrill.

JIM: *You learned your inking technique from the cartoonist who drew MARK TRAIL, right.*

JACK: That was **Ed Dodd.** He is originally from Gainesville, Georgia. He needed an inker, so I would go to his house and ink the backgrounds and he would do the heads and the faces. And you learned to use a certain brush and what-have-you. It was good, it was educational. That was just for a summer.

JIM: *Getting back to your comics days, you worked for MAD, as well as the horror comics, didn't you?*

JACK: Yes, and then after a short time I left MAD to go with **Harvey Kurtzman** and do HUMBUG for a while. I also did some things for CRACKED, the MAD imitator that **John Severin** is working for now.

JIM: *What was HUMBUG like?*

JACK: It was about half the size of a regular comic book. It was black and white, with a one-color cover, and type instead of lettering. Harvey was the editor, and basically he was the business department, too. It was a different little magazine, and I think it was very, very good. But it wasn't distributed very well, and artists are not businessmen. That's one reason it fell apart. It ran about ten issues, and then we just abandoned it. Then I went to TRUMP, which was put out by PLAYBOY. It was similar to HUMBUG, but in a slick format. Everything in it was in color, a lot of it four-color. It was a pretty magazine, but we couldn't meet the deadlines and it took too much time for it to be put out, so it sank.

JIM: *That's too bad. It seems like an idea that was just a little ahead of its time.*

JACK: Yeah. You know, NATIONAL LAMPOON now is something like TRUMP in many ways.

JIM: *Where did you go after TRUMP failed?*

JACK: I was pretty much on my own. That's when I started working anywhere I could, doing a lot of record covers, and all that freelancing. In a way, TRUMP's failure was kind of a godsend, because that's when I got into advertising, which is a lot more lucrative.

Alfred E.Neuman, from a MAD spoof of the TV show SIXTY MINUTES.

JIM: *You've talked about some of your favorite types of comic books. What do you prefer in the way of comic strips?*

JACK: I love HAGAR THE HORRIBLE, B.C. and THE WIZARD OF ID — and, of course, there's SHOE. I think **Jeff MacNelly** is just unbelievable. He's a great writer and a great artist, too — a very talented guy.

JIM: *What do you think of the state of comic books now?*

JACK: I'm amazed when I look at HEAVY METAL and things like that, the talent I see. There's a lot of talent in the field right now. Overseas, a lot of the cartoonists are unbelievable. How they work is beyond me. They must be paid an awful lot of money, or they're incredibly dedicated.

JIM: *Are there any comic-book artists in particular whose work you like?*

JACK: I think **Joe Kubert** is fantastic.

JIM: *How about the old masters?*

JACK: I like **Dsumler.** He had some great compositions, and you could consider him to be one of the first cartoonists to come out of the old school. And then there was **Heinrich Klee**, who drew all

From Jack's college days: 'risque' student humor.

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WHY YOU'RE... YOU'RE THE LONE STRANGER!

* 1965 Educational Comics, Inc.

One of the many classic parodies Jack illustrated for the early MAD.

elephants with pen and ink. His motions and movements with elephants were just unbelievable.

JIM: *Were there any cartoonists contemporary with you who influenced your work?*

JACK: Not really. I think my influences go further back, to people like **Alex Raymond** and **Hal Foster.** Of course, I'm a cartoonist, not an illustrator like they were. But **Raymond** had a lot of humor and exaggeration in his figures, even though they were fairly illustrative. And there was **Milton Caniff,** with his lights and darks and his looseness. I think *everybody* was influenced by him.

JIM: *You've done a little bit of work in animation, too, haven't you?*

JACK: I've done a little bit of *everything!* (*Laughter.*) Anything you could think about, I've done it. When I talk to people and they ask me what I do, I say I'm a cartoonist but I can't tell them what kind. I'm not syndicated, and I'm not an editorial cartoonist. It's kind of hard to categorize me. I just follow the freelance cartooning.

JIM: *What sort of things are you working on right now?*

JACK: Well, I've got a lead story that I've got to get to MAD next week, then I'm working on a catalogue for Spaulding in Japan. It's just a whole backlog of things, but it's nice to keep busy.

JIM: *What about the work you've been doing for the University of Georgia athletic department?*

JACK: I've been following the Georgia Bulldogs since I was a student here. Through a friend, I got to meet **Loran Smith,** who's sort of the publicity guy for the Bulldog Club, and I started doing billboards for them.

JIM: *What work of yours has given you the greatest personal satisfaction?*

JACK: I think the covers I've done for TIME Magazine — including one of **Gerald Ford** that I liked very much — could be considered the high-water mark of my career. The first cover I did for TIME, one of **Joe Namath,** gave me the biggest pleasure. Once, I was walking through Times Square with my dad. He was getting pretty old, you know. And we looked up to see this great, big billboard sign — my poster for the movie, IT'S A MAD, MAD, MAD, MAD WORLD — stretching up 13 floors or something — *my* art! That was a big thrill. There have been a lot of thrills, a lot of happiness.

JIM: *Any advice for up-and-coming young cartoonists?*

JACK: I would tell any young person coming along that it takes a lot of work and you have to enjoy what you're doing. If you don't enjoy it and believe in yourself, you'd better get out. I enjoy it when it's not like work. It's work when you get overloaded and deadlines sneak up on you. But it is very rewarding.

JIM: *Any projects you'd like to do for your own personal satisfaction?*

JACK: I'd love to paint some rural southern or western scenes. But there's no call for me to do that now. I'd have to do it on my own.

JIM: *Maybe a project for you to do when you retire?*

JACK: I'll never retire.

COUNT DRACULA

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TOM ORZECHOWSKI

*In Part One, Tom Orzechowski told interviewer Diana Schutz about his fan days, his early career at Marvel, the hazards of working in New York City, his move west with the free-wheeling Young Turks (among them Starlin and Englehart) of STAR*REACH, his lettering seminars, and the infamous "Cosmic Code Authority."*

Now, in Part Two, Orz talks with Diana about his work with Chris Claremont on THE X-MEN and NEW MUTANTS, his philosophy of lettering, why letterers don't get royalties, all about designing an alphabet for THE X-MEN, and why Dark Phoenix spoke in such ragged balloons . . .

DIANA: *What was your first X-MEN issue?*

TOM: My first X-MEN work was in issue #80 relettering a blurb on the cover of a reprint. Then I moved back to California just as the new series was underway. **Len Wein** wrote the first issue, and it went immediately over to Chris, who was the new kid on the block — but he was living on the block. I don't know why, but they sent me issue #94 to letter. I did it sporadically thereafter. I did #105 when I was in New York and became acquainted with Chris really for the first time, and we did STARLORD together as a result of that meeting, with **John Byrne** and **Terry Austin**, and that combination worked so well in everyone's mind that we all moved over to do X-MEN. So I did X-MEN pretty much from the time **Byrne** came onto it and ever since.

DIANA: *Despite the fact that neither Byrne nor Austin are still on the book, you still are, and you contribute to the look of that book, don't you think?*

TOM: So nice of you to say so! I took that book as my challenge, because it was the only real dependable monthly I had — I would do a MAN-WOLF here and there or an AVENGERS every once in a while, but I counted on X-MEN regularly. In that and in SAVAGE SWORD I started developing typefaces. I developed what turned into a complicated typeface for X-MEN that was so intricate that I dropped it after about six issues and had to resurrect it when they reprinted the Dark Phoenix kiss-off a few months ago. I had trouble recreating it, it was so peculiar! But when **Martin Pasko** parodied X-MEN in E-MAN about a year ago, **Janice Chiang** mimicked my typeface, because I guess someone felt it was identifiable with X-MEN. So I guess I made my mark over there.

DIANA: *What do you consider the most important criterion of good lettering in comics?*

TOM: Legibility. Anything else is just very nice window dressing. You have to be able to read the stuff.

DIANA: *How does that differ from logo designs?*

TOM: I've been a bad boy from time to time, and if I was lettering a story and I couldn't make any sense out of it, I'd do a title that couldn't necessarily be read at first glance, either! It's hard to say. They don't place as many strictures on lettering as they do on illustration. Letterers aren't really required to know the elements of calligraphy; the whole point is to be legible, so the emphasis isn't on title design. I do that mostly because I get a great deal of amusement out of it, and

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TOM ORZECHOWSKI

"I took THE X-MEN as my challenge."

since when I was learning this stuff in the middle '70s I didn't want to make a lot of money, I didn't want to work a lot — so I spent as much time as I wanted designing letter forms and learning about letter forms.

DIANA: *In fact, you have an extensive research library that you've put together through the years that would rival some official city public libraries.*

TOM: Maybe not that good. They've got a very good one at the San Francisco library. I've got a nice thing called ALPHABETS: OLD AND NEW from 1902 and all kinds of books with titles like MODERN LETTERING and LETTERING OF TODAY from the '30s, and three or four very nice brush-lettering books from the '20s. SCORPIO ROSE and a few logos for Eclipse came straight out of those sort of books. I try to keep myself open to all the sources possible because that gives you a real variety in the look. I'm trying to work more towards the styles of paperbacks or pulp magazines than I am towards the purist styles of comic books.

DIANA: *How do you go about formulating a logo design?*

TOM: I try to keep in mind who my publisher is, who my editor is, who the characters are. Eclipse has been much more liberal in its design policy than Marvel has, so something like the logo for SCORPIO ROSE wouldn't have gone to Marvel. They just wouldn't have gone for that sort of thing. The Epic Comics line is taking just about anything I come up with, but Marvel likes to see roughs, and I usually provide three or four. The first one will be just anything that comes off the top of my head, the second will be an improvement on that, the third an amalgamation of the first two, the fourth one usually something in a completely different direction. I try to keep that sort of thing in mind, and sometimes I don't even submit all those. I don't do as many logos as, say, **Jim Novak**, just because I'm so busy lettering pages. It's almost ironic: I wanted to design logos, but I'm so busy just making bread and butter that I don't get to do the design work that I want to.

DIANA: *What kind of research do you do?*

TOM: Oh, I usually rough out what I'm thinking about and then go back and see if there's any validity for it in the past.

DIANA: *What do you mean by "validity?"*

TOM: Well, for example: did they ever actually make E's this way to go with R's that were made that way? As long as I can find a precedent for it, then I know the design elements work. I may find, in fact, that the E and the R match, but I was making the L inaccurately, so then I can make the L fit the sequence much more readily.

DIANA: *You seem to have a much more scholarly approach to you work than many letterers.*

TOM: Well, some of the others like to take time off! They like to play baseball and stuff! I'd rather spend the time designing — that's my recreation.

DIANA: *What logos have you done recently?*

TOM: Oh, the second HERCULES logo, the KILLRAVEN graphic novel, the ELRIC logo for the Marvel graphic novel as well as the PC book — which are two different logos — NEW MUTANTS, WOLVERINE, the MARVEL FUMETTI BOOK. I did most of the Eclipse line — SABRE, DETECTIVES INC., STEWART THE RAT, NIGHT MUSIC for **Craig Russell** — and the Eclipse insignia.

DIANA: *Have you done any logo work for DC?*

TOM: I did the remake on the BLACK-

X-Men meet Teen Titans in the historic Marvel/DC crossover. Claremont script, Simonson and Austin art, Orz lettering.

INTRODUCTIONS ARE QUICKLY EXCHANGED. THE FIRST, TENTATIVE STEPS TOWARD FRIENDSHIP MADE.
AFTER THE INTRODUCTIONS ARE EXCHANGED, I SUGGEST AN ALLIANCE.
MY SENTIMENTS, EXACTLY.
I'M CYCLOPS.
ROBIN, BE GOOD ENOUGH TO INFORM YOUR FRIENDS...
BUT THAT DOESN'T TELL ME ANYTHING ABOUT THEIR POWERS.
HE'S KINDA CUTE, TOO.
THERE IS, IN STORM, AN INNER SERENITY, A BALANCE AND MOBILITY OF SPIRIT THAT REMINDS ME OF ARAH. YET HER COMPANION, WOLVERINE, POSSESSES A CAPACITY FOR VIOLENCE GREATER EVEN THAN NORMAN'S.
AROUND HIM, I MUST FOREVER BE ON MY GUARD. LEST HIS INNER FURY 2 PRIME ME DOWN.
HMM? I SPOON THE RED LADY? I WONDER WHY?

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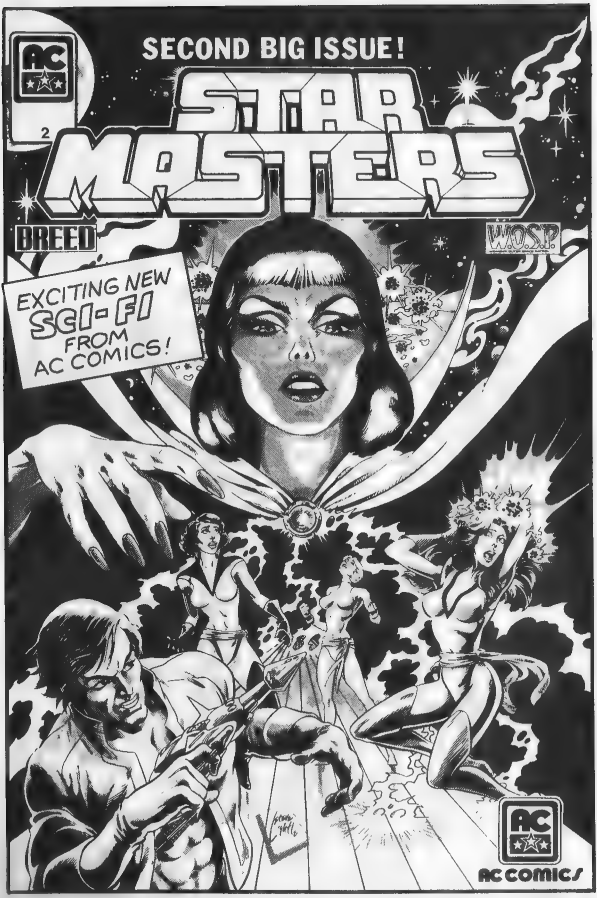
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2
STAR MASTERS
BREED
W.O.S.P.
EXCITING NEW SCI-FI FROM AC COMICS!
AC COMICS

"A lot of guys develop umbilical cords."

HAWK logo, but that had to be done overnight, and I wasn't that happy with what they got.

DIANA: *Still, that must have been a nice offer for you, given your affinity for BLACKHAWK.*

TOM: Yeah, that's the only series that I've got almost complete back to the '40s.

DIANA: *How long does it take you to letter a page, on the average?*

TOM: On the average, an hour. Sometimes two an hour, sometimes a page every two hours.

DIANA: *As opposed to putting in, as you once told me, seven hours on the ELRIC logo for Pacific.* (Laughter.)

TOM: The pay is substantially better for an ELRIC logo.

DIANA: *You've recently started lettering Bill Sienkiewicz's NEW MUTANTS pages. How does it feel to cover up that gorgeous artwork?*

TOM: It's a pleasure! *(Laughter.)* I talked with **Ana Nocenti**, the editor, briefly about this sort of thing. I've got a bit of a free hand in repositioning copy, which **Chris Claremont** is keeping to a real minimum for Bill, anyway. But the way I look at it, each thing on the page counts as a unit of information, be it copy or a clenched fist, so you place the copy in a spot where, as information, it doesn't conflict with the clenched fist or the crowd scene or other units of information. Chris is pretty good about this. I think letterers can pretty much feel free to move copy around if they realize it will take less space or more space than indicated. So I just try to stay out of Bill's way.

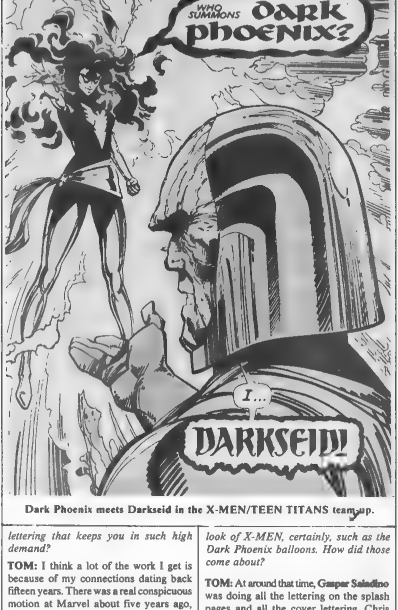
DIANA: *Do you ever edit copy or feel that you'd like to?*

TOM: Letterer/editors are very much frowned upon, when there are editors and writers who are paid for what they're doing. I get latitude from **Trina Robbins** to add things like bold words, and different writers let me add my own sound effects, but basically I do what I'm told.

DIANA: *How's your spelling?*

TOM: It's good. I was studying journalism, as I said, and **Mark Evanier** was just very praiseworthy of the fact that I never made any misspellings. He was lying! *(Laughter.)* Mark flatters the people he likes to work with.

DIANA: *Speaking of being flattered, what is it about your particular style of lettering that keeps you in such high demand?*



Dark Phoenix meets Darkseid in the X-MEN/TEEN TITANS team-up.

TOM: I think a lot of the work I get is because of my connections dating back fifteen years. There was a real conspicuous motion at Marvel about five years ago, just as they installed all these new editors, to solidify the teams, to make sure that the look of the books was as continual as possible. They kept **Joe Rosen** on DARE-DEVIL after **Frank Miller** left and even before **Miller**, to have that certain consistent rhythm in there, and he did keep the book continual-looking when **Klaus Janson** was pencilling it. There's a feeling in the office that it doesn't hurt to have the same look on the book every month.

DIANA: *And you have done some specific things that are very much a part of the look of X-MEN, certainly, such as the Dark Phoenix balloons. How did those come about?*

TOM: At around that time, **Gaspar Saladino** was doing all the lettering on the splash pages and all the cover lettering. Chris and the other writers would indicate the type of special effects Gaspar and **John Costanza** were doing that they liked, so that the subsequent letterers would copy them and keep the lettering of the same value. Chris suggested a real raggedy kind of balloon for Dark Phoenix. I had an old brush that I had used on animation cels that was completely useless, so I used that for drawing the Dark Phoenix balloons. It was so raggedy that I couldn't control the line, and I figured it matched her character.

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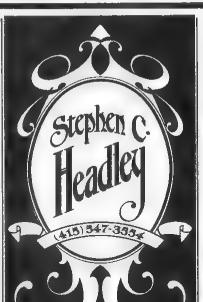
"Legibility is the most important thing in

DIANA: *What, in your opinion, does the letterer contribute overall to the work?*

TOM: An even texture. Lettering isn't supposed to be that visible against the artwork. If the copy is placed well, it's usually placed over things that don't make a lot of difference or are repetitive, like the sides of buildings or a cape that's swooshing in the air — if you see part of the cape, you get the impression that it's swooshing, you don't have to see the whole cape. So we're supposed to provide a tone that isn't that noticeable and that doesn't obstruct the artwork. And dazzle things up with lettering effects when that's necessary, but for the most part, we stay bloody well out of the way. There's been a movement for everyone to letter smaller in the last few years. I have a sense of proportions to my lettering that most other folks don't use. I keep my O's and my D's rounder; most everyone else turns more towards triangular shapes. So I can pack a little more copy in the same area, and I can leave the tops of the heads intact and that sort of thing. The idea is to stay out of the way, but do it attractively, so those that stay out of the way the best are in the most demand. **Joe Rosen** letters very small. **John Costanza** works small now.



Orz-designed business card.

DIANA: *In the last couple of years, the whole industry has gone through many changes and one of the greatest ones has been the institution of the royalty system — which, of course, only applies to writers, penciliers and inkers. Yet if it's true, in fact, that letterers — and colorists, for that matter — do contribute to the overall look of a book and are therefore in some sense partly responsible for the total sales on that book, it's curious that the royalty plan does not extend to them. How do you feel about that?*

TOM: The royalty systems at DC and Marvel are not the same, and they're quite different at Pacific and First. The plans were instituted, for the most part, by people who are or have been writers or artists. Not a whole lot of letterers or colorists reach the top levels of management. The top guys favor themselves. You can't argue the fact that **Frank Miller** was selling DAREDEVIL, because it was a very shaky bimonthly when he took it and he put it up to the top of the line, and **Byrne** did a similar thing with FANTASTIC FOUR. On the middle-level books, it's less apparent that it's the penciller, the inker, or the scripter who's selling it. They didn't pay royalties to anybody three years ago. I think it's just a system that's still new and needs to have the bugs worked out. I'd love to see royalties passed all around, including *editors.* Editors have been known to quit and take up writing, because they want to be in on the royalties themselves, so I think it will eventually come to the attention of the powers-that-be that it's just a matter of a

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ALSO ENDORSED BY:

Bill Sienkiewicz	Walter Simonson	Mike Grell	Roy Thomas
Mike Friedrich	Marv Wolfman	Jack Kirby	Gerry Conway
Jan Duursema	Jack C. Harris	Len Wein	Scott Shaw

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lettering. The rest is just window dressing."

BUB, THE DAY I'M SCARED O' YOU..
..IS THE DAY I'D BETTER LIE DOWN AND DIE!
THAT'S THE SPIRIT, PAL.
HERE HE COMES. NO SUBTLETY TO HIS ATTACK, JUST A HEAD-ON CHARGE
BIG TALK, MISTER. LET'S SEE YOU PUT YOUR MONEY WHERE YOUR MOUTH IS

© 1978 MCG

Tom is probably best known for his X-MEN lettering. Above panel from X-MEN #127 — words by Claremont, art by Byrne and Austin.

couple of more minutes of bookkeeping to distribute it more evenly.

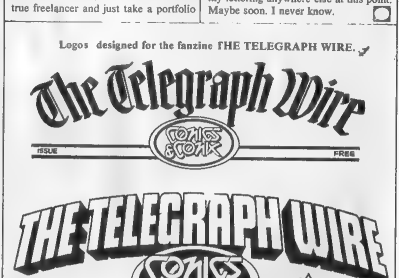
DIANA: *In the last couple of years, you've taken on apprentices, notably David Cody Weiss who, within about six months of assisting you, was doing professional work, and most recently, L. Lois Bohalis who, after only four months of apprenticeship, has begun working professionally. Is this something that you intend to continue doing? Do you enjoy teaching?*

TOM: I guess so. I didn't do very well as a student, but I seem to be able to do pretty well on the other side of the podium. David was working in that direction anyway, and I needed someone locally who I could assign small jobs to that *I* couldn't handle and that needed to be lettered in a professional manner. David was "between situations" and had been dabbling at comics for the last ten years, anyway. He presented me with a decent portfolio of samples. I groomed him as rapidly as possible for the different lettering situations. He went to Marvel, and after being on staff there for a few months, just happened to be available for work when **Roy Thomas** needed a letterer on the west coast. He then moved down to San Diego where Pacific Comics is based, so he was able to pick up plenty of work there. Then, Lois showed up with a pretty fair book of samples. We didn't think that she would break into professional work as quickly. She was prepared to be an apprentice for a year, but almost at once I couldn't handle all the work that **Trina Robbins** had, and it didn't really demand *my* touch so much as just the touch of good-looking lettering. Within a few months of that, David was getting bogged down with PC work and couldn't handle all of Roy's output, so Roy needed someone to do **ARAK**. Lois was easily good enough. I'm still helping her with her titles and sound effects — they're always the toughest stuff to do anyway. But her dialogue and balloons are coming along very well.

DIANA: *Have you given any thought to working outside of comics?*

TOM: I was playing with these things a few years ago, before Chris was suddenly writing about four books a month and before I was as firmly attached to my projects as I am now. I used to do fliers for a rock 'n' roll bar a little further down the coast. I did some work for Columbia Records when I was staying in Toronto a few years ago, and I know people in that end of it. But with the vagaries of working commercially I don't know if I'd be able to make a living outside comics. Since there's less activity on the West Coast than in New York, I'd have to act like a true freelancer and just take a portfolio door to door and see if the real world wants me, or if I'm so tailored to comic books that I'm better off keeping my designs there. I'm tending more towards designing typefaces. I've got a few things that I can't quite get the courage up to submit to Letraset. I've got block alphabets, I've got Blackletter type alphabets, I've got 1906 style alphabets. I do business cards and letterheads on the side and different things like this. But mostly I do comics. There's an umbilical cord that a lot of guys develop. Comics are there every month, and you kind of perfect what you're doing in the context of what they demand, and maybe you can go a little further if you want to. If outside offers come in, you take them. But I just don't really have the time or the nerve to take my lettering anywhere else at this point. Maybe soon. I never know.

Logos designed for the fanzine THE TELEGRAPH WIRE.



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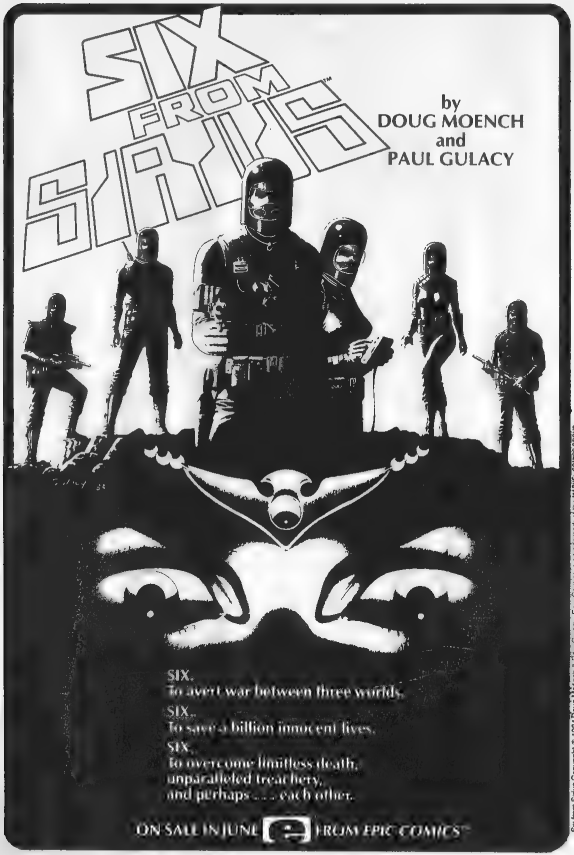
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"X-MEN is incredible. It just keeps selling and we don't know where it'll stop."

Art: Walter Simonson © 1984 MCG

LOUISE SIMONSON

Having edited some of Marvel's most successful titles Louise Simonson is now seeing life from the other side of the editor's desk — she's become a freelance writer. (See COMICS INTERVIEW #9 for a First Look at her creation, Marvel's POWER PACK.) Louise is also writing MARVEL TEAM-UP, and her latest brainchild, THE STARRIORS. Fellow Marvelite Jim Massara, spoke to "Weezie" (as she's called by friends and colleagues) about her new career, her former ones, her literary influences (from HEIDI to Heinlein), and her colleagues (including Chris Claremont and Louise's husband, Walt Simonson), eliciting from Louise some ingenuous and ingenius insights into editing comics, breaking the "Kirby barrier," and why Catholics — Louise feels — make great comic-book writers.

JIM MASSARA: *You're best known as the X-MEN editor. What else have you edited?*

LOUISE SIMONSON: I had all the Conan titles, SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN, KING CONAN and CONAN THE BARBARIAN. I had MICRONAUTS and I had BATTLESTAR GALACTICA at one point. It's hard to remember. They shuffled them around again and again and again. I had SHOGUN WARRIORS — oh, how could I forget SHOGUN WARRIORS! THE X-MEN and THE NEW MUTANTS came later. I know I got STAR WARS somewhere in there, I can't remember when. You know,

"Chris Claremont is a major contributing factor in making X-MEN so appealing."

at one point I was doing the equivalent of thirteen books a month, which was really a bit ridiculous. **Jim Shooter** hired some new people so everyone's work load was cut down.

JIM: *About how many editors were there back then?*

WEEZIE: Five, I think.

JIM: *How would you describe your duties as an editor to someone who didn't know anything about comics?*

WEEZIE: First of all, I'd have to tell them how a comic is produced. First, the writer does a plot that looks a lot like a short story. This is given to an artist, a penciller, to draw on paper in pencil — to break it down into a panel-by-panel sequence. The pencilled pages then go back to the writer, who scripts it in a format that looks a good bit like a play. Then the pencilled page and the script go to a letterer, who letters the balloons and captions in black ink. Once it's lettered, it goes to the inker, who goes over the pencil lines in black ink to darken them up so that the pages become camera-ready. The camera-ready pages are then reduced to a smaller size as photostats. Color indications are given for the printer. And then the entire book is proofread and corrections are made, and then it goes off to the printer.

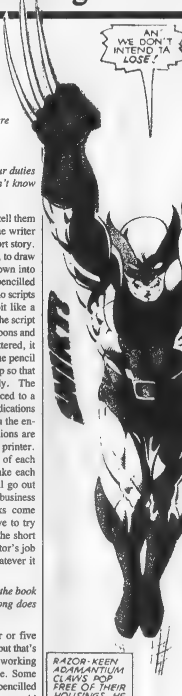
The editor stands in the middle of each one of these steps and tries to make each step go smoothly, so the book will go out on time. It's a very tough deadline business that we're in. I mean, the books come around every month, and you have to try to get the best quality you can in the short time allotted to you. So it's the editor's job to see that this quality gets in, whatever it takes.

JIM: *From plot inception to when the book is sent off to the printer — how long does that take?*

WEEZIE: Typically, maybe four or five months. I've done it in two weeks, but that's really not the way to do it. You're working on a lot of books at the same time. Some books are being plotted, scripted, pencilled and inked at the same time, so you could be working on four or five issues of the same comic simultaneously.

JIM: *What books were you editing recently?*

WEEZIE: STAR WARS, X-MEN and NEW MUTANTS — my core books — and a number of X-MEN mini- series being done. There's one with Nightcrawler coming up, and another with Kitty and Wolverine. We are doing a couple of mini-series with new characters. One is LONG SHOT, and the other is called FIRE-STAR, the latter being a spin- off from one of Marvel's animated cartoon shows.


AH! WE DON'T INTEND TA LOSE!
RAZOR-KEEN ADAMANTIUM CLAWS POP FREE OF THEIR HOUSINGS HE ARMS TO BURY THEM IN THE YOUNG QUEEN'S HEARTS.

Wolverine — comin' at ya in X-MEN #167. Words by Chris Claremont, art by Paul Smith.

JIM: *Has Fire-star ever been in a comic book before?*

WEEZIE: No, she never has. And it's done so cleverly! **Tom DeFalco** wrote it and he did such a good job — it's definitely worth reading. I hesitate to say anything more about it for fear I'll give something away. A new writer, **Ann Nocenti**, is working on LONG SHOT, with an absolutely brilliant new artist, **Art Adams**. One of the fun things about editing is discovering an absolutely brilliant new talent that's sitting around out there just waiting to work. Art's kind of slow right now, as guys are when they just start. Doing twenty-two pages a month is real difficult, and it's something you have to work up to. One of the fastest artists in the business today started off penciilling and inking a page a week. Now he can write, pencil and ink twenty-two pages a month, which is pretty good.

JIM: *And who is that, may I ask?*

WEEZIE: It's Walt — Walt Simonson.

JIM: . . . *who is also your husband.*

WEEZIE: He's incredibly fast now, but he used to be the world's slowest artist. *(Laughter.)* It took him about four years to work up to cruising speed, breaking "the **Kirby** barrier," as it's called.

JIM: *"The Kirby barrier"?*

WEEZIE: **Jack Kirby** was exceptionally quick. He could produce an incredible number of pages. When someone begins to work up to a better-than-adequate speed, we say they've broken "the **Kirby** barrier".

JIM: *How did the books you've been editing do, as far as sales?*

WEEZIE: Great. I got lucky. THE X-MEN is the best selling comic in America right now. We're not quite sure on THE NEW MUTANTS, just where that one is going to settle out. It's not quite as high as THE X-MEN.

JIM: *Did it start higher and then drop?*

WEEZIE: They always start high and then slack off. As far as the direct sales go, it's always fourth in the line of the regular comics. That doesn't take into account the newsstand sales, which can alter where a book stands in the line.

JIM: *Could you explain — for the benefit*

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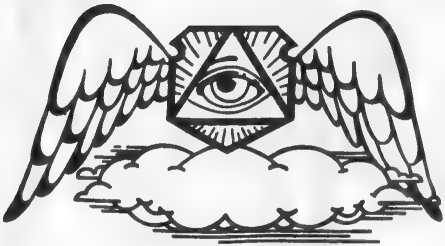
Coming This Fall



From Skymarc Comics

"The best talent in comics was siphoned off."

WELL, DOGS! WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?
CAN'T YOU DECIDE WHO'LL BE THE FIRST TO DIE?
HE'S A BIG TALKER, THIS CIMMERIAN, BUT WHAT SPEWS FROM HIS MOUTH IS ONLY SO MUCH BLUSTER!
AFTER ALL, LOOK HOW MANY OF US THERE ARE!

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John Buscema art, Michael Fleisher dialogue from SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #73, edited by Weezie.

of those who may not know — what you mean by "direct" and "newsstand" sales?

WEEZIE: Comics are sold in three different major ways. One is direct sales — that is, through comic-book stores that sell comic books exclusively. Another way is through the newsstands, and another is through subscription. Some books will do incredibly well through the comics shops that cater to *affcionados*, and not do so well on newsstands that sell to the mass audience. Some books are the other way around. STAR WARS is one of these. STAR WARS has a relatively small direct-sales figure — down in the lower third, I guess. Newsstand pushes it up way near the top of all books we do, certainly in the top ten. I think, myself, that it may be selling to a younger audience, young people who don't frequent comics shops exclusively, who buy their books at the candy shop or the newsstand or the corner drugstore or whatever. CONAN is another one that sells to a non-comic-*affcionado* audience. CONAN seems to sell about the same as STAR WARS does, both at direct and on the newsstands. It's weird.

JIM: *How about X-MEN and NEW MUTANTS?*

WEEZIE: X-MEN sells about as many on the newsstand as it does direct. That book is incredible. It's gotta stop somewhere, but we haven't seen it yet. For four years people have been saying, "Ahh! It's all downhill from here. You can't sell any more comics than that." And then it just keeps selling more. So we really don't know where it's going to stop. It's strange — not that we're complaining, mind you.

JIM: *How long has the book been selling like that?*

WEEZIE: Ever since I came here. I took it over with issue #137.

JIM: *What was the creative team on it then?*

WEEZIE: Claremont, Byrne and **Austin.** In fact, I came in on the middle of the death-of-Phoenix issue, in which one of the major characters, who had been with the book since its inception, died. There were a lot of people who wrote in about it and were very angry, and said, "We're never buying this comic again." Also, soon after that, the creative team changed. **Dave Cockrum** took over as penciller, **Joe Rubinstein** was inker, with **Claremont** still writing. And everyone said, "Oh, the X-MEN will never be the same, we'll never buy it again, this is the end. So much for those great sales." And the sales went up! Then we lost **Cockrum**, and we got **Paul Smith** and **Bob Wiacek. But Claremont** was still writing it. Maybe **Claremont** was the key. Certainly he is a major contributing factor in making this book so appealing to people. He creates the characterizations, and I think he makes the characters really live for a lot of people. Then we lost that creative team. We've got **John Romita, Jr.,** and **Dan Green,** with Chris still writing it, and from what I've seen of the last issue that **Romita** and

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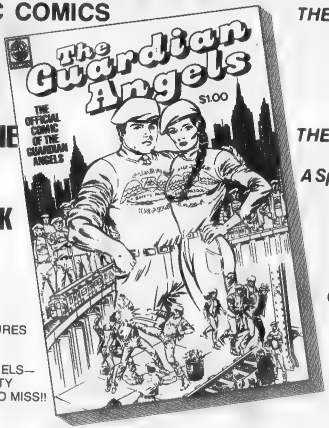

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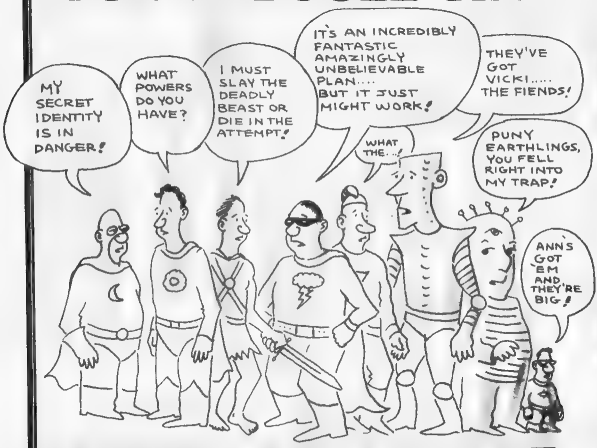
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"Villains with majesty are the best kind."

Green did, the sales can only go up. If they don't there's something wrong with the market out there. The pages are beautiful. I hesitate to say it's the best the book's ever looked. It keeps looking good, but in different ways.

JIM: *What do you think sells the book — the characters or the creative team?*

WEEZIE: The characters. That's a difficult question, though. I don't think you can really separate the characters from the creative teams. I think Chris is so involved with the characters that he creates, and knows them so well, he really does it better than anyone else. He's created personae for the characters that everyone has come to want to get involved with. But when we put the X-Men into other books with other writers and other artists, they seem to increase the sales on those books, too. I think it's just that people want to find out what the X-Men are up to. It seems to be that way with the New Mutants, also. They don't seem to have as strong a support as the X-Men, but they're a much younger team. The X-Men have been around about 180 issues now. You can build a lot of support and interest in a character over that many issues.

JIM: *Those high sales would surprise a non-comics fan. You say "X-Men" to a non-fan, and he would say, "Who?" But if you mention Spider-Man, the Hulk — the old standards — a non-fan knows immediately who you're talking about. Yet the sales on their books aren't nearly as good.*

WEEZIE: They're the comics they read when they were kids.

ANN NOCENTI: They're also licensed more visibly.

JIM: *Yeah. Somebody who doesn't know anything about comics at least knows who Spider-Man is.*

WEEZIE: The people who've grown up will maybe remember reading X-MEN, but I don't think they'll remember them the way they'll remember SPIDER-MAN. The X-Men were created a long time ago by **Stan Lee** and **Jack Kirby,** but they weren't one of their major creations. Maybe their time just hadn't come. When they were re-created I think it really sparked people's imaginations. Occasionally, that happens. It happened with THOR, which Walt is doing now. It used to be, as far as the directs go, a fairly low seller. Since then it's — God — doubled, tripled, quadrupled? I guess it's quadrupled its sales in the last four issues. Thor is a character that people remembered from a long time ago and they always loved, but maybe they just weren't excited with the way it was being done. They are now!

JIM: *How much is Walt's first issue of THOR worth now, not all that many months after it came out?*

WEEZIE: Oh, we hear it's going for $12 in places, but that's so hard to believe. I mean, we've seen it advertised for that, but that's crazy. Apparently, they keep printing more and more of each issue and the issues still keep selling out. That's gotta stop somewhere, too, like THE X-MEN. It just can't go on, but we don't know where it's going to level off. I don't think anything like that has ever happened in comics before.

JIM: *You mean with somebody new coming onto a book?*

WEEZIE: With that rapid a rise. It didn't happen that fast when **Frank Miller** came onto DAREDEVIL. It went up a fair amount over a year. But nobody could have predicted that.

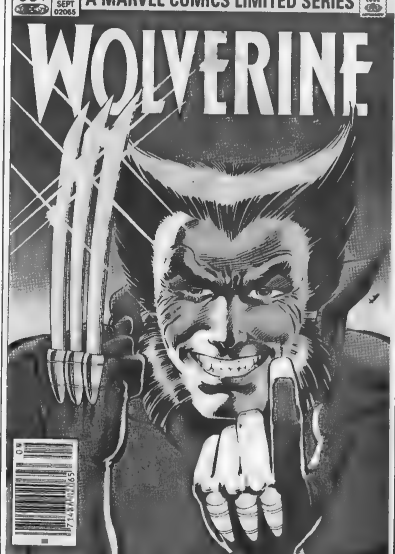
JIM: *Do you think that the fans are maybe more tuned into this sort of thing now than they were even a few years ago?*

WEEZIE: That's possible. We certainly have a more educated audience.

JIM: *So they're saying, "Aha, this is going to be the next Frank Miller DAREDEVIL."*

WEEZIE: They're getting on the bandwagon sort of early, which is nice. THOR is a good comic book, so I think they're getting their money's worth. But $12 is a little ridiculous.

Weezie edited the hit WOLVERINE mini-series by Claremont and Miller.



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LOUISE SIMONSON

"Starlin's DEATH OF CAPTAIN MARVEL was a Catholic comic book."

JIM: *Let's talk about your background. You're originally from Atlanta?*

WEEZIE: Yes, I am.

JIM: *And where did you go to school when you were in Atlanta?*

WEEZIE: I went to St. Anthony's grade school

JIM: *Are you Catholic?*

WEEZIE: Oh, yes. Are you?

JIM: *Yup*

WEEZIE (to Ann Nocenti): You are too, right?

ANN: Uh-huh.

JIM: *I'm not practicing. I'm afraid I'm a fallen Catholic*

WEEZIE: So am I. There are lots of us around. I personally feel that a Catholic education is the best education you can have to do comic books. If I wanted to educate a child to do comic books, I would send him to a parochial school. *(Pregnant pause.)* Now, why is this, you might ask?

JIM: *Why is this, Louise?*

WEEZIE: Because you're taught a very strong belief in a right and a wrong, which is what we're doing in comics. We're telling morality tales. Black and white, tales of good and evil, in a kind of cosmic setting. Some of the finest comics artists and writers were educated in Catholic schools, or were raised as Catholics. There's **Wrightson, Miller, Starlin** — all of these death-oriented, extremely creative people. Also, you're taught to think in Catholic schools. It's a good education. If it were up to me, I would make every child who wanted to be a comic-book writer go to Catholic schools from first to ninth grade — during their most impressionable years

JIM: *That's funny, because I was talking about that with Carl Potts just the other day. I was reading THE DEATH OF CAPTAIN MARVEL for the first time, and there was the Pieta on the front cover. I snickered a little bit, because it was awfully pretentious . . .*

WEEZIE: Yeah, it was — but I loved it! It was a Catholic comic book

JIM: . . . *Captain Marvel as a Christ-like figure. And Carl told me the same thing you were telling me.*

WEEZIE: I had one teacher in Catholic school, Sister Maria Theresa, who was "mean," but I now wonder if maybe that wasn't the right way to teach seventh graders. You know, a whip and a chain, and you still remember it. *(Laughter.)* Actually, all she did was growl and throw erasers — and those only at the boys. She was a good teacher. I'm thinking of doing a character based on my memories of her in POWER PACK, sometime.

ANN: The thing I remember was you were taught all these myths you were encouraged to believe in. You're this little kid, and you've got these huge fantasies and myths, all bouncing around in your head — all these big concepts. You have to think about original sin and sacrifice and all this stuff . . .

WEEZIE: . . . and it's a wonderful education for comics, isn't it? They get you thinking big from the very beginning.

ANN: People get upset if you didn't believe in those myths — whereas, with something like Santa Claus, you weren't forced to believe as much.

WEEZIE: You know how when you're a kid you'll have favorite myths? My absolute favorite was the one about the battle between the good angels and the bad angels, and Lucifer, for his pride, is cast out of heaven. I love that one. That is a real comic-book theme. Thematically, I expect I will be doing that in one comic or another. It's just classic. Most of our villains are classical Lucifer characters. They're proud. Some even have their hearts in the right place — sort of — but it's their pride that really does them in. They think they know more than everybody else. There's Doctor Doom, and Magneto — I guess those are my two favorite villains in the world. Villains with majesty — those are really the best kind. When you're a child and you're taught to believe in the devil, you really get a feeling for magnificent villains. This is probably something the Catholic church didn't *want* to teach, however.

ANN: You know, you're also taught about choice. In the Bible, God gave Lucifer a choice to be a fallen angel. Free will is another important concept in comic books.

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LOUISE SIMONSON

"Stan Lee brought an Old Testament

Especially in Marvel comic books. It's something that **Stan Lee** put in.

JIM: *Stan Lee wasn't Catholic.*

WEEZIE: No, he wasn't. Which proves it isn't a requisite — and that there are other ways of acquiring a sense of myth and majesty. I think that Judaism, also, has the feeling of myth and of history. I mean, a lot of what we're talking about is Old Testament stuff, and Stan was able to bring that to his comics. That's why they were so good. Free will, the ability to make a free choice, is something that thematically you'll find in Stan's comics over and over again. Comics, as **Stan Lee** re-created them, were more than punch-and-hit stories. They were stories of character where people made important choices. There was an internal conflict which a character had to resolve. The conflict was symbolized by all the punching and hitting. These were symbolic stories. A lot of the stuff that you learn when you're a child, I think, plays a very important part in your later development — especially if you're going to be a creator of some sort, a writer or an artist. And certainly, a lot of creators who didn't have a religious or classical education managed to acquire this feeling of myth and majesty. You know, Jim, you may be able to sell this to CATHOLIC DIGEST.

JIM: *Yes, "Fallen Catholics Write Comic Books."* (Laughter.) *So, you went to a Catholic grade school . . .*

WEEZIE: . . . and a Catholic high school, St. Josephs. It was only around for about ten years, and I was in the first graduating class. The nuns were all excellent teachers, but not all of the lay teachers were as good. Consequently, there were huge gaps in my education — Spanish and chemistry, for instance — which probably shouldn't be there.

JIM: *What were you interested in at the time?*

WEEZIE: Writing and drawing. Of course, I've been interested in English and art ever since I was real little.

JIM: *At that time, did you went to go into comic books?*

WEEZIE: Are you kidding? It never even occurred to me that people did comic books for a living!

JIM: *What did you want to do?*

WEEZIE: Being an artist or a writer seemed like an impossible dream that only the lucky, gifted few could aspire to. I thought that maybe I'd be a teacher. That's one of the many things that editors do. Sometimes you teach and sometimes you learn. After St. Joseph's, I went on to Georgia State College for two years, then moved to New York with my former husband, who wanted to come here and try his hand at illustration. After my daughter was born and my marriage fell apart I got a job here, working in the circulation department, then the advertising-promotion department of a magazine publisher — McFadden-Bartell, which published sports magazines, PHOTOPLAY, and some other stuff. **Michelle Brand**, who is now **Berni Wrightson's** wife, worked at Warren, and she told me, "We need somebody in our production department at Warren. They're going to pay you fairly well. Why don't you come see if you can get a job there?" Well, my job in the advertising-promotion department had taught me to do all kinds of things that I had never done before. It was a very small department and anything you could do was appreciated. So I had learned to do paste-ups and mechanicals, and write brochures, and plan banquets, and all sorts of weird stuff. It was really a nice place to work, but paid virtually nothing. So I went to work at Warren, and that's when I actually first started working in comics.

Doctor Doom — Marvel's version of Lucifer? Art by George Perez.

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feeling of myth and history to comics."

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John Buscema illustrates the quasi-Biblical prose of Stan Lee in THE SILVER SURFER #3.

JIM: *Had you read comics as a kid?*

WEEZIE: Some. I didn't read superhero comics. The only ones I had seen when I was a child were the Superman comics, and I always thought Lois Lane was kind of stupid. I liked the Donald Duck comics, LITTLE LULU, some of the Archies and — God help me — some of the ECs that I [redacted].

JIM: *It sounds as if you are embarrassed to say you like EC comics.*

WEEZIE: God, no. Are you kidding? But during the Fifties there was a huge outcry against some of the violence that was going on in comics at the time, and indeed some of them were violent, and maybe not always in the best of taste. The Comics Code Authority was created to act as an internal monitoring system for comics. The EC comics were regarded as the worst offenders. Consequently, they went by the wayside. Some of the EC books had incredible high quality, as far as the art and stories were concerned. Even though they got a little blood-thirsty at times, there were some that were brilliant. I didn't see that many of them, but I can still remember the first EC story I ever saw . . . a **Wally Wood** story. It was incredible. There were craters on the walls, craters all over the place. Woody used to draw craters on everything! I was just blown away. I had never seen anything quite like it. Later on, I became interested in comics through my first husband, who was looking at the early Warren comics that **Archie Goodwin** was editing at the time. They were also of incredibly high quality. **Archie Goodwin's** writing was really good, and the art was excellent. In a way, those comics sort of shaped my vision of what comics should be.

JIM: *And so, interestingly enough, there you are, a little later, working at Warren. What did you do there?*

WEEZIE: Paste-ups, mechanicals, lettering corrections, art corrections and stuff like that. But that's not my *forte*, I'm afraid. I

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"A Catholic education is the best educa-

really wasn't very good at it. But then I learned they needed someone to do the letters columns and to write advertising copy, and being my usual self I said, "Oh, goe, that looks like fun. Can I try to do that, too?" And they said sure, because it was another small company where they were delighted to have anybody who wanted to lend a hand at absolutely anything. So they created an assistant editor's job for me, and after a couple of years, when the editor, **Bill DuBay**, left, they made me an editor. I edited CREEPY, EERIE and VAMPIRELLA.

JIM: *And now, after editing a whole bunch of books at Marvel for several years, you're starting to write, too.*

WEEZIE: Yes. I'm doing POWER PACK.

JIM: *I notice that you named one of the POWER PACK kids after your daughter, Julie.*

WEEZIE: I think that's the character a lot of women who read the book will recognize. She's similar to what I was at ten. Sort of quiet and well-behaved and uninclined to make waves. In actual fact, I suspect she'll grow up differently. But she's also sort of fanciful and day-dreamy, which I think maybe a lot of girls who grow up to be writers and artists are at that age. Her mom's an artist, so I suspect maybe Julie will be, too. One of my theories about the way that at least some families function is that if there are several children in a family, as there were in my family, each child picks his or her area of expertise. You decide what you're going to be good at, and that's what you *are* good at. Sometimes it's decided for you, because sometimes you're better in some areas than in others. But generally it seems to me that kids in a family will often pick their own areas to specialize in — their preserve. The other kids have to find something else.

When I was a little girl, I was different from a lot of the other kids. A lot of men have told me that when they were little boys, they wanted to read stories about grown-up males. But when I was a child, if the people I was reading about weren't at least close to my own age, I wasn't interested. Even the comics I read were mostly about kids — SUGAR AND SPIKE, LITTLE LULU, and so on. During the summers I read a book a day. I read adventure stories, such as **Walter Farley**'s a-boy-and-his-dog (or horse) books. There were very few girl-adventure stories, although the **Marguerite Henry** books often had both boy and girl protagonists. And there were the **Edward Eager** books — my favorites were HALF-MAGIC and KNIGHT'S CASTLE. They featured groups of boys and girls, most often siblings or cousins. I read HEIDI and all the **Louisa May Alcott** books at least eight times apiece. **T. H. White**'s ONCE AND FUTURE KING, an absolutely incredible adaptation of the Arthurian legend, blew me away. I must have read it a billion-trillion

I DON'T LIKE HIM MUCH EITHER, KIDDO, BUT I GUESS WE CAN'T LIKE EVERYBODY WE WORK WITH.
LIKE THAT ART DIRECTOR WHO BUYS YOUR PAINTINGS?

Margaret and Jim Power, parents of the POWER PACK kids, bear a distinct resemblance to Weezie and Walt Simonson. Art by June Brigman from POWER PACK #1.

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tion you can have to do comic books."

times. A lot of those books I still read. I'll go back, every three years or so, and re-read them. I've got them practically memorized by now. And what I find with THE ONCE AND FUTURE KING in particular is that there were parts of it that I liked when I was young and parts I didn't like, and as I got older, my favorite parts shifted. It's written on several different levels and explores a lot of different themes that spoke to me differently at different ages and at different points in my life. That's one book I'd recommend to everybody. Also everything by **Robert Heinlein** is great. I read the **Burroughs** books, **Andre Norton,** plays, biographies and romantic fiction and historical adventures. I read anything that came across my path. *(Carl Potts enters.)* Oh, hi, Carl.

CARL POTTS: Whenever you get done, Jim, can **Bob Harras** borrow the recorder? I just wanted to give the recorder to Bob so he could tape Ralph's reaction when he came in.

(Ralph Macchio had been sick for about a week, and in the interim a bunch of the editors had rearranged his office, gotten a nameplate that read "Ernie Colon" and forged a memo from Shooter advising everybody that Ralph had finally been canned. They were going to try to make Ralph believe he had been replaced by Colon, and they wanted to borrow the recorder to tape his reaction when he came back.)

CARL: Do you have any spare tape?

JIM: *I don't know if I have any spare tape, but Bob can have the recorder.* (Carl exits.) *What would you tell somebody if he wanted to get into comic books?*

WEEZIE: Get really good. The quality of the people who are getting into the business now is so high that you just have to work as hard as you can to be the best you can be. You gotta learn to think logically and clearly, no matter what you're doing, whether it's in art or writing. Take all the classes you can and pay attention to everything everybody says about your writing and art. Show your writing and art to people who don't know what the heck you're doing, and get them to look at it. Your mother is always a good person, because your mother has no clues, generally speaking, about comic books. She's an intelligent but untutored audience. If your mother can follow the story you've written without any questions at all, or follow the story you've drawn sequentially, panel-by-panel, then you've told a clear story, which is the most important thing. Comics is really a story-telling medium.

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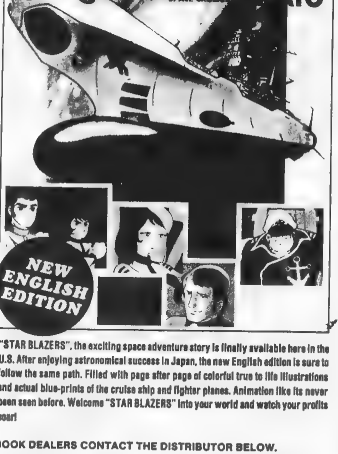

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As befits a minister, Rogers is quite serious about his mission: to present the image of a caring and mature adult to his young audience. He's a daily friend, a gentle teacher and a stable parental figure. Although he politely avoids saying so, for some of this watchers he is undoubtedly the only stable parental figure. As such, he is concerned about the effects of violent entertainment on very young children. He has devoted whole programs to helping children deal with superhero fantasy, and once took the show to the set of THE INCREDIBLE HULK to demonstrate that Bill Bixby and Lou Ferrigno are really two different people and that it's all just make-believe...

"In the face of very difficult circumstances, everybody wishes once in a while that he or she had superhuman ways of dealing with difficulty."

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DAN HAGEN: *Do you think superheroes are harmful for young children?*

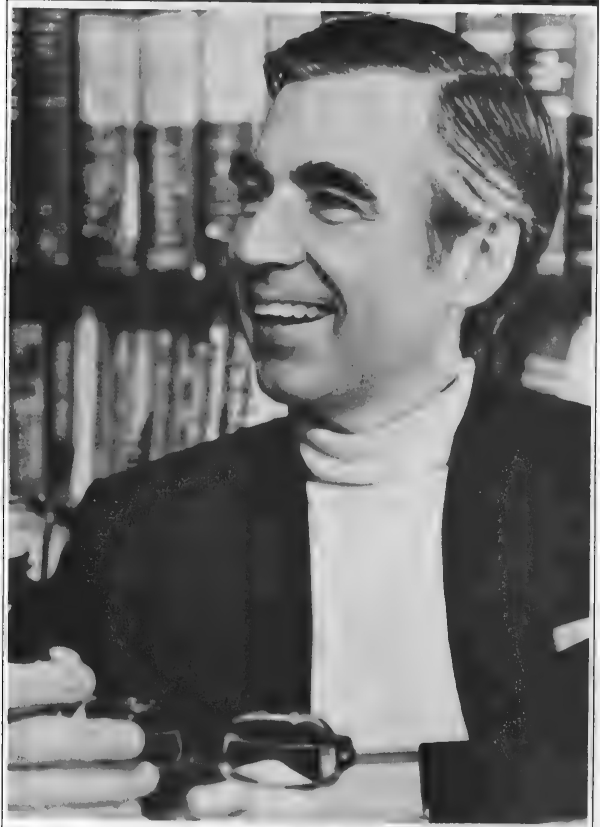
MR. ROGERS: They're very natural for children. The first superheroes, of course, are the parents themselves. There is a very natural stage in the development of the human personality in which we believe that we ourselves are omnipotent, and that our parents are omnipotent, and what we're able to do anything. But we have to help children *gently* along the way to realize that nobody is omnipotent, and neither are the heroes on television.

DAN: *Why do you stress "gently"?*

MR. ROGERS: Because even though children would love to think that they could take on the world and win, it can also be very frightening for them to think that they *are* omnipotent — and that what they think will, indeed, happen.

One of the things that our HULK program came from was reading about kids who were killing themselves playing superheroes, and also from knowing how widespread superhero play is among children. It's important for adults to know how blurred the lines are between reality and fantasy in young childrens' minds.

The first superheroes are the parents."



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"We're not condemning fantasy."

DAN: *Why do children find superheroes so attractive, do you think?*

MR. ROGERS: Children are small. There are all kinds of big powerful things in their environment over which they feel they have no control. When they get angry, they often project their anger onto people and things around them, expecting them to have the same intensity of feeling. So in order to overcome the fear which results from being little in a big, scary world, children often pretend that they are extraordinary, huge, and have superhuman powers — powers even greater than the big people and things around them. Seeing superheroes on television and in comic books feeds that "personal pretend." In the face of very difficult circumstances, everybody wishes once in a while that he or she had superhuman ways of dealing with difficulty.

As usual, we're not condemning fantasy. It's often the basis for resolution and invention. What we're doing is helping children to understand that human beings can pretend about being super-strong, super-big, super-fast, etc., but that it's their real selves which do all the important things in the world. It's essential for their play to be safe so they can grow and develop into what's really super about each one of them.

DAN: *I know you believe in levelling with children as much as possible.'*

MR. ROGERS: I think that one of the most important things that I can do is to give children another honest adult in their lives.

DAN: *In that case, what about Santa Claus?*

MR. ROGERS: I like kids to think that they're part of a tradition, and if the tradition was a pleasant one in the homes of the parents, when the parents were children, then it probably is very natural that the parents would carry it on with *their* kids. My wife and I let our two sons believe in Santa as long as they wanted to, but that wasn't terribly long, because I would never lie to the kids when they would ask me questions.

DAN: *What about violence on television?*

MR. ROGERS: There are so many people who think, "Oh, just let the kids see anything." I think that can really be damaging. There are so many programs on television now that are not fit for preschool children.

DAN: *Who should be doing something about unsuitable programming? The networks? The parents?*

Bill Bixby and Lou Ferrigno are not really the Hulk. It's all make-believe.

MR. ROGERS: Everybody should do something. There's no doubt in my mind that television influences behavior. I don't think that there would be any commercials on the air if that weren't so. Everybody brings his or her own personal drama to whatever he or she is looking at or reading. If that inner turmoil is reflected on the screen, then it's just enhanced in the mind of the viewer.

Now, there would be some people who could take the violence on television because they weren't participating with their own inner violence. But we have to remember that there are so many people who are very angry. The best thing these people could possibly see would be some very creative problem-solving on the air, rather than simply violent problem-solving.

DAN: *Does Mister Rogers ever get angry?*

MR. ROGERS: Oh, yes. As a matter of fact, I did on the program one time, because I wanted the kids to know that's an acceptable feeling. I got angry because I had just gotten a parking ticket. But I showed the kids that it's how you deal with your anger that counts, and I showed them the kinds of things that you can do that can be constructive. I even took them to court with me.

DAN: *Ah, well . . . so much for the sins of Mister Rogers.* (Laughter.)

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Fred McFeely Rogers
Occupation: Television personality, child psychologist, Presbyterian minister, musician.
Born: 20 March 1928
Family: He and his wife — concert pianist Joanne Rogers — have two sons, Jamie and John.
The Incredible Thing About Him: He's for real.

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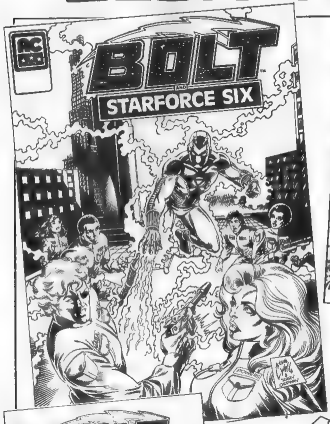

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LAST WORD

Comics Interview 234 Fifth Ave. Suite 301 New York, NY 10001

OOPS!

Dear David:

Thought the **Grant/Baron** interview in #8 turned out quite well.

It looks like a major editing error was made in the Griffy interview. I may be wrong, but it seems unlikely that Griffy thought his collaborator on YOUNG LUST was **Jay Kennedy** instead of **Jay Kinney**. Someone should have caught that one (or not inserted it in the first place). My apologies if it was Griffy that made the error, but like I said, it seems unlikely.

Take care and good luck with COMICS INTERVIEW!

Richard Bruning
Capital Publications Inc.
2 W. Mifflin, Suite 200
Madison, WI 53703

Sometimes the most obvious mistakes are the easiest to miss — that one slipped right past both Bill and me. Thanks for catching the typo, Rich, and setting the record straight.

—DAK

ENGLISH UPDATE

Dear DAK:

COMICS INTERVIEW #8 has recently reached Britain; as ever, an excellent read and, with my own CONQUEROR scripting and publishing endeavor in mind, I found the interview of **Mike Baron** and **Steve Grant** particularly interesting. Darn cunning of Mike to make an SF comic so acceptable by putting the central character in a superhero suit!

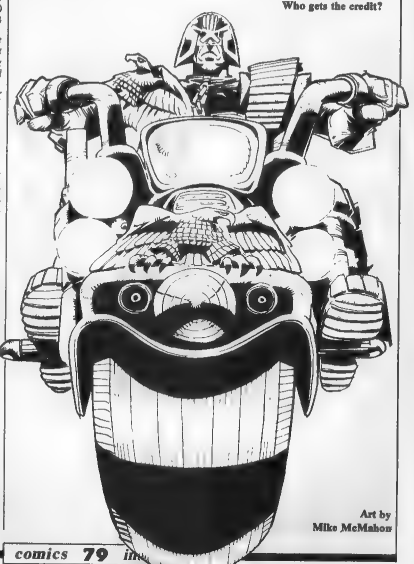
It's the **Richard Burton** interview I'd like to make a couple of comments about; nice to read interviews like this with people who I've known for years, and who have been good friends to FANTASY ADVERTISER and, before that, BEM, supplying news, always ready to talk, and generally just a pleasure to meet.

However, I thought the introduction was just a little misleading. His role probably expanded since I visited the Command Module (well, editorial office, if you insist) but at that stage he was more involved with text pages and proof-reading and opening the mail than with the glamour stuff. I'm sure he did work with writers and artists on some 2000 AD series — but the editor of 2000 AD continues to be **Steve McManus**, who must take more credit for the style and success of the comic than anyone else, including the original creators of the title. But then, Steve was never visible as a fan, and never edited a top-rank newszine, and never received an offer to move to New York to work at DC as **Mike Gold**'s assistant on public relations (since that was shortly before the DC Implosion, I imagine Richard was rather relieved he desined the honor)!

Anyway, Richard has now moved away from 2000 AD, and been replaced as assistant editor; he's now second-in command to the editor of BIG K, which is a monthly home computer/gaming magazine aimed at teenagers. No comics there — though he has infiltrated one or two 2000 AD regulars on spot illustrations, and I noticed panels of Walter the Wobot (from JUDGE DREDD) and Artie Gruber (from HARLEM HEROES) in the first issue, when I had a quick browse through a copy. I presume this is a promotion for Richard — well deserved after his years of sterling service — though what happens if the magazine folds, I don't know. Will he be able to return to 2000 AD, or will IPC send him on to a rather less interesting title? But then, maybe the fortnightly JUDGE DREDD comic will be starting up, and need its own editorial team, or an expansion of the 2000 AD office . . . the possibilities are endless.

Richard seemed a little hard on LOOK-

JUDGE DREDD — Who gets the credit?



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IN, the Independent Television Publications weekly, saying the sales "aren't great" — about two-and-a-half times as many per week as 2000 AD, the last I heard! The comics content can't take all the credit, though, as it usually has a photo of a TV star or pop group on the front, and related features inside. It currently runs six two-page strips: **Gerry Anderson's** TERRAHAWKS (the latest successor to THUNDERBIRDS) and DANGER MOUSE (a comedy cartoon TV show) in full colour, and THE FALL GUY, KNIGHT RIDER, CANNON & BALL (TV comedians), and BUCKS FIZZ (the pop group). Strips never run more than two pages a week, but they've done some fine stuff; **John Bolton's** full-colour work on THE BIONIC WOMAN some years back comes to mind, and **Arthur Ranson's** SAPPHIRE AND STEEL . . . and I remember **Martin Asbury** showing me some of his KUNG FU originals when we both lived in the same town.

DC did have a monthly over here called DC: THE SUPERHEROES, until a year or so ago, and we do still get about four British annuals starring DC heroes.

Martin Lock
Harrier Publications
3, Marlow Court
Brittania Square
Worcester WR1 3DP
England

MARVEL PUTS OUT CRAP

Dear Dave:

Thanks loads for publishing my letter in issue #8. What I like about your magazine is that it is unique, in the sense that it does not pander to the lowest common denominator and interview the same old "Fan Favorites."

In 1982, I stopped buying Marvel Comics because of the decline in the quality of the books, due to **Jim Shooter's** editorial policies and certain writers and artists (or writer/artists) devastating or remaking the characters. It was the news of **Doug Moench's** departure from Marvel and **Gene Day's** death — as well as several characters that I had read and loved for many years being threatened with destruction by **Jim Shooter** — that finally forced me to walk away from a company that I had loved for many years.

Most of us who have been around for a good number of years in fandom know that if Marvel had their way, *they* would be the only people publishing comics in the direct sales market — because, as far as Marvel is concerned, these new companies are more trouble than they're worth. In case anybody out there does not know it, Marvel did not want any part of creator-owned copyrights and other policies, such as royalties. Eclipse, Pacific, First and many others trailblazed these breakthroughs — but as soon as these alternative publishers got the ball rolling, DC in its infinite wisdom instituted royalties, and Marvel followed *last*.

It is the fans themselves who must bear the brunt of the blame. They know about all of the things that **Shooter** has done to the creative people who worked for him and have seen how it has harmed the books — but yet the fans continue to buy Marvel! **Shooter** feels we peasants should settle for whatever plebian reading matter we can snatch off the Marvel racks. Readers of US 1, GENERIC COMIC, DAZZLER, and GI JOE can attest that the man has singlehandedly done more damage to the Marvel universe than Galactus, Dr. Doom, Kang, or the Mole Man ever could!

Let's show **Jim Shooter** that we can walk away from Marvel Comics and not come back. Let's show Marvel that they can have bottom-of-the-barrel sales, too. The distributors and the retailers who keep saying that Marvel puts out crap should be chastized, too, because *they* carry the stuff!

Dave, thanks for letting me have my say. I'd rather write to my *favorite* fan magazines — yours and TCR — than fanzines that I

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Jonathan Smith
(address withheld by request)

PS—Please *don't* interview **Gary Groth**. If getting down on my hands and knees is the way to convince you, then I will do it. I got away from his lousy rag last year, and I just couldn't stand to see an interview with him. He has his own space in THE COMICS JOURNAL — let him stay there.

MANTLO'S MEMORIES

Dear Dave,

It's amazing! Just last night I was sitting around wondering what ever became of **Gardner Fox**, a man who perhaps as much as **Stan Lee**, **Jack Kirby** and **Steve Ditko** introduced me to comics, and who did it first.

Gardner Fox

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Oh, I'd read most everything I could get my hands on back then, the late '50s and early '60s, but it was ADAM STRANGE and THE FLASH and, of course, THE BRAVE & THE BOLD starring the Justice League of America that really hooked me, and that brought me back week after week to my local candy store until one day I noticed, hidden under a copy of GREEN LANTERN, THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #4. So I guess I owe my introduction to Marvel to Gardner, too.

Like Stan's, Gardner's stories have never faded from my memory. The wonder they inspired and the pleasure they afforded are both incredible achievements. I'd like to thank **Gardner Fox** here for all those fun-filled years, and I'd like to thank INTERVIEW for bringing back the memories.

Bill Mantlo
New York City

Thank you, Bill, for taking the time to share some positive sentiments.

—DAK

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NEXT ISSUE: Former Marvel editor-in-chief *Gerry Conway* tells the exciting behind-the-scenes story of co-writing the new CONAN II movie, as well as what he's got in the works for the new JLA and his other DC comics series! Veteran comics insider *Ernie Colon* shares untold tales of the industry — from CONAN to CASPER THE FRIENDLY GHOST! Porno star *Kelly Nichols* reveals her secret life — as a comics collector! Lots more! Don't miss COMICS INTERVIEW #13!

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- Swords of Cerebus
- Thunder Agents (John C. Pratt)
- Voyages (Fabulous Dreams)
- Whisper (Capital Publ.)

ECLIPSE COMICS
- Alien Fires
- Dinosaur Dusk
- DNAgents
- Eclipse
- Hall of Fame Series

ECLIPSE COMICS
- John Law (Mr. Evans)
- Ms. Tree
- Sabre
- Comics Rose
- Any Eclipse # 1

AMERICOMICS
- Americomics
- Americomics Special
- Black Diamond
- Bolt & Star Force 6
- Fun Comics
- Sentinels of Justice
- Any Americomics # 1

EAGLE COMICS
- Judge Dredd (color)

FAN MAGAZINES
- Amazing Heroes
- Bondage (James Bond)
- Comic Book Price Guide Update # 2
- Comic Fandom's Forum
- Comic Informer
- Comic News
- Comic Scene
- Comics Collector
- Comics Feature
- Comics Interview
- Comics Journal
- Comics Scene
- Enterprise Incidents
- Fantave
- Fantasy Chronicles Series
- Fantastic Explorer
- Fantasy Book (SF)
- Fantasy Empire
- Fantasy Images
- Golden Age of Comics
- Marvel Comics Index
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- Rising Star
- Video Gaming Illustrated
- Comic Book Price Guide # 1-3

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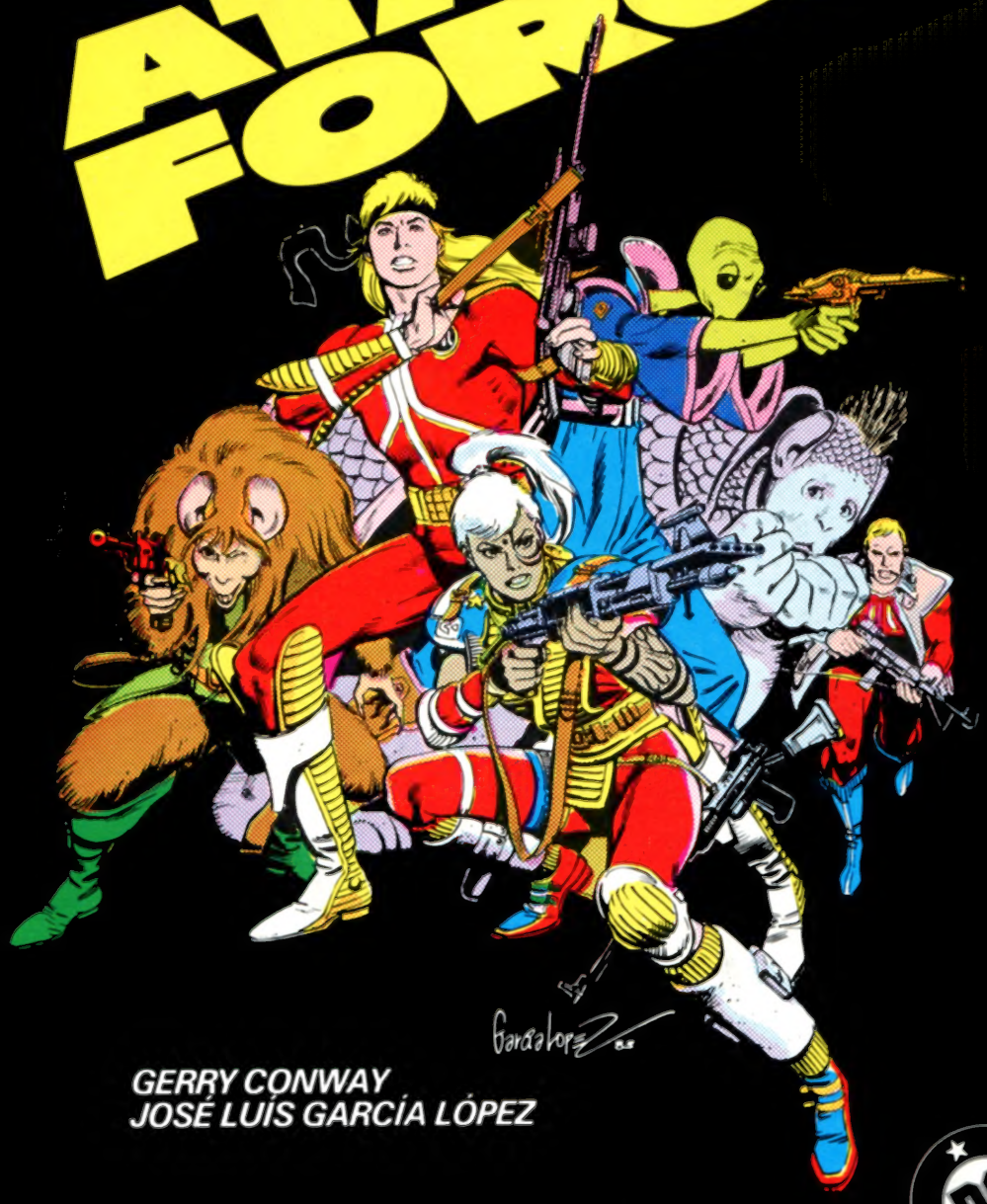

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